

BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

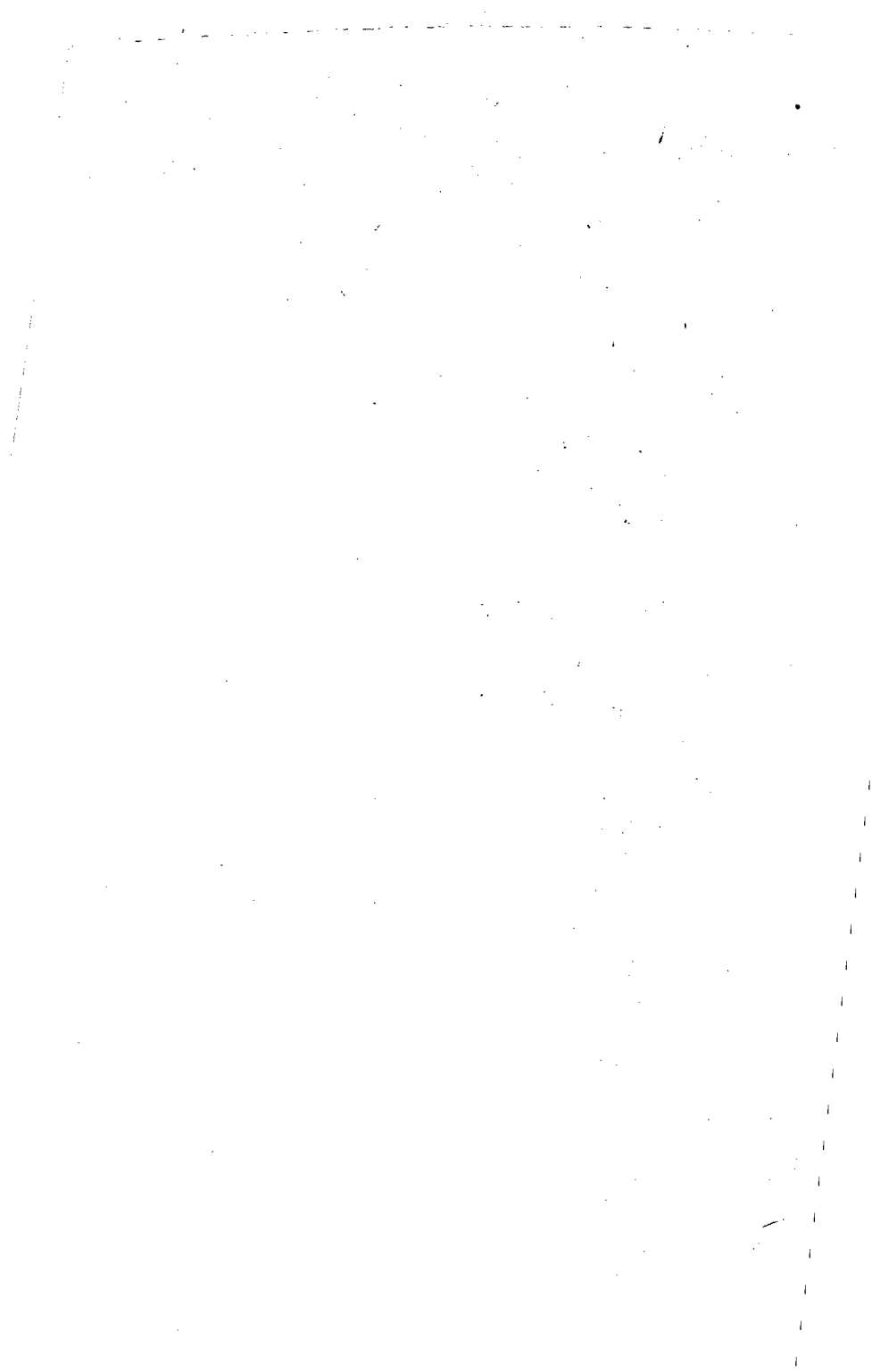
On the Canvas of History



DR. SUKHDIAL SINGH

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ruthless struggle simply to wreak his vengeance upon the tyrant ? What was the nature of this struggle ? What response his call for struggle against the Mughals evoked amongst the people ? Would it be justifiable to dismiss all the charges of brutality levelled against him by his enemies ? What was his political objective ? What spectacular methods he adopted to demolish the terror of the Mughal sovereignty from the minds of the people ? Ghulam Muhyee-ud-Din's *Futuhāt Namah*, provides answers to all these questions. Prof. Gurbakhsh Singh writes about this account. It is very valuable contemporary source on Banda Singh Bahadur. It is given for the benefit of the readers.

Prof. Gurbakhsh Singh also writes about *Asrar-i-Samadi*, one more contemporary account of Banda Singh. The author of the *Asrar-i-Samadi*, Munshi Jot Parkash, was a court official of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore. Therefore, his eye-witness account of the last phase of Banda Singh's struggle against the Mughal imperialism offers itself as a highly useful source of trustworthy information on this period of great political turmoil for the Mughals. Prof. Gurbakhsh Singh has in this paper presented an analysis of *Asrar-i-Samadi*.

The writings of Sir G.C. Narang, Prof. Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, Khushwant Singh and Prof. Harbans Singh have prominent place in the history of Banda Singh Bahadur. Therefore, the accounts written by these writers are also included in this book for a comparative study. The papers of Prof. Nayyar, Dr. Surinder Singh, Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrdian, Prof. S.D. Gajrani, Prof. S.K. Gupta, Dr. Jaspal Kaur, Dr. K.S. Bajwa, Dr. Kulbir Singh Dhillon, Mr. Jashandeep Singh Sandhu and myself were read in the seminar. These papers throw a new light on the theme. Thus, the early and the fresh writings are in the hands of the readers. This volume is dedicated to the memory of our great hero Banda Singh Bahadur.

there is no reference of Banda Singh Bahadur in the history but it is fully dominated with the references of French Revolution.

To throw light on all these issues and to bring into limelight some new aspects of Banda Singh Bahadur's achievements, the Department of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, organized a one day seminar on the 12th of April, 2005 at Punjabi University, Patiala. The theme of the seminar was "Banda Singh Bahadur on the Canvas of History". This seminar was sponsored by the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi. Prof. Kirpal Singh, Chandigarh, inaugurated this seminar. Prof. Dilbag Singh of Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, presided over the seminar. The inaugural and the presidential addresses are given in this book.

The worthy Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala, Sardar Swarn Singh Ji Boparai, Kirti Chakra, patronised this seminar. Various scholars of repute were requested to present the papers. There was an overwhelming response to the request. Twenty papers in English and Punjabi languages were received for presentation. All these papers were read in the seminar. Each paper reflected the spirit of the theme. I am grateful to all the contributors.

It is decided to produce these papers into two separate volumes in English and Punjabi. Besides the papers read in the seminar, some papers of the renowned historians, written earlier, are also given in this volume. These papers are written on the contemporary accounts of Banda Singh Bahadur. In fact, these papers are the analytical studies of the contemporary persians accounts.

Dr. Bhagat Singh writes about *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*. It is a collection of the news which were used to be sent to the court of the Mughal Emperor. They had an elaborate system for the collection of the news from all over the country through a network of official news-writers called *waqai-nawis* or *akhbar-nawis*. They used to send their news-sheets to the imperial capital where a regular department functioned for the compilation of the day-to-day news of the kingdom. Dr. Ganda Singh collected these news from the old historical records department, Jaipur. Dr. Bhagat Singh translated these into English. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* is a very valuable contemporary source on Banda Singh Bahadur. That is why it is given in this book.

Ghulam Mohyee-ud-din is the author of *Futuh-at-Namah-i-Samodi*. He was not only the contemporary of Banda Singh Bahadur but had also fought against him in the battle of Gurdas Nangal. It was written in 1722-23. It gives the information about Banda Singh's struggle for sovereignty. There are many question-marks about this struggle. Was Banda Singh carrying a

Introduction

Banda Singh Bahadur is one of the greatest characters of the Punjab History. But he was a character who was the most misunderstood and misinterpreted by our own historians. It is an irony of our history. The Muslim writers write about this great hero under their pro-Islamic prejudices. They have readily accepted the false and flimsy rumours as historical truths and have charged Banda Singh Bahadur with the blackest cruelty and barbarism. The works of the Sikh writers particularly of Rattan Singh Bhangu, Giani Gian Singh and Karam Singh Historian tarnished the historical personality of Banda Singh. They have laid undue emphasis on the differences between Banda Singh and the so called *Tat Khalsa*. Not merely do they sometimes adopt a partisan attitude but they allow their judgement of men and matters to be clouded by their sectarian partiality. Rattan Singh Bhangu and Karm Singh Historian belonged to those Sikh leaders; called *Tat Khalsa* which betrayed Banda Singh Bahadur during the struggle. Giani Gian Singh was himself a Nirmala Saint. His sectarian views did not accept the Khalsa code of conduct in full-form. The Nirmal sect has no belief in the five *Kakar* philosophy of the Khalsa, while Banda Singh Bahadur was a staunch Khalsa. Thus, the life-history of Banda Singh Bahadur has suffered the most at their hands under wrong notions. Most of the European writers have also followed these writers and have believed them implicitly.

Banda Singh Bahadur had to his credit many 'firsts' in the history of the Punjab. For the first time in the history of the Punjab, there is only Banda Singh Bahadur who raised himself from the lowest position to the sovereign of a state. He left Nanded Sahib with just a handful of soldiers but when he reached Punjab he collected thousands of the soldiers to fight for sovereignty. He destroyed not only the military career of the ablest generals of the Mughal army but also uprooted the mughal Empire from the land of the Punjab. This Empire was one of the mightiest empires of the world at that time. For the first time in the history of the Sikhs, Banda Singh Bahadur established the Khalsa state and issued its coins and stamps.

It is believed in the world history that only the French Revolution issued the declaration of human rights. But Banda Singh Bahadur abolished the Zamindari system and introduced peasant proprietorship in 1709-10, eighty years before the French Revolution. The declaration of the abolition of Jagirdari System and the rights of proprietorship, is recognised even today as one of the best fiscal reforms done by Banda Singh. Ironically,

Inaugural Address

Inaugural Address by Prof. Kirpal Singh, Chandigarh, formerly Head, Department of Punjab Historical Studies, delivered at the Seminar "Banda Singh Bahadur On the Canvas of History" organised in the Punjabi University, Patiala on April 12, 2005.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Sardar S. S. Boparai, Kirti Chakra, Prof. Dilbagh Singh, President of the Seminar, Dr. Sukhdial Singh, Director, Punjab Historical Studies Department, Dr. Parm Bakhshish Singh, Registrar, esteemed friends, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am beholden to the authorities of Punjabi University, Patiala who have invited me to inaugurate this seminar. For me, this is homecoming as I have served this University for more than twenty years and have got old association with it.

"Banda Singh Bahadur on the Canvas of History" is a very suitable topic for the seminar as he had been greatly misunderstood. Some writers call him Banda Bairagi which is a misnomer. He was the product of Sikh movement and had been converted to Sikhism after taking Pahul.¹ He had been appointed Commander of the Khalsa forces and he attributed his victories to Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The inscription on his coin was :

Sikka Zad bar Har Dó Alam

Tegh-i-Nanak wahib ast.

Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan

Fazal-i-Sacha Sahib ast.

"Coin struck in the world by the Grace of true Lord. Victory to Gobind Singh, the King of Kings, the sword of Nanak is granter of desires."

The seal of Banda Singh Bahadur had the following inscription :

Dego Tegho Fateh o Nusrat Bedirang

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

Kettle (symbol of means to feed the poor) and sword (symbol to protect the weak and the helpless) victory and unhesitating patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.²

As a military general, he showed skill in adopting different strategies and tactics of war. It was not a small achievement to shake the Mughal Empire with meagre resources. After the conquest of Kaithal and Samana, he took circular route by passing through Shahabad, Sadhaura, reaching Chhat Banur by the route near the foot of mountains. Wazir Khan, the Faujdar of Sirhind was not unaware of the strategy of Banda Singh because he had taken to long route as he was waiting for the arrival of Majha-Doaba and Malwa Sikhs to join him. He had sent them Hukamnamahs of Guru Gobind Singh to join him. Wazir Khan, therefore, was doing his best to prevent the union of the sikh forces. First he sent contingent of Mughal and Afghan troops to block their way to cross Sutlej.³ But Majha and Doaba Sikhs were successful in crossing the river. Again Wazir Khan with huge army came to the village Chappar Chirhi to intercept the union of the Sikh armies. But he was not successful as the Sikh armies were united to fight the Mughals. Chappar Chirhi is on the road from Kharar to Banur and is about twenty miles from Sirhind. Here unequal battle was fought between the Mughal army and the Sikh forces under Banda Singh. Mughal army was well trained and well equipped whereas Sikh forces were untrained and had no ammunition. They were far less in number. Mughal forces were more than twenty thousand.⁴ The Sikhs fought enthusiastically and won. Wazir Khan was killed and the Mughal army being disheartened began to flee. The Sikhs pursued them resulting in huge massacre of enemy forces. They snatched their ammunition and were

able to conquer the fort of Sirhind (1710 AD) where the young son of Guru Gobind Singh had been martyred.

History has not done justice to Banda Singh Bahadur. The very people for whom he struggled hard to give them taste of political freedom, sacrificed everything to safeguard their faith and ultimately gave his life, was obliterated by them. He was downgraded to such an extent that his name was removed from the roll of Sikh martyrs. A book with title *SIKH MARTYRS* written in 1919 by no less eminent Sikh intellectual than Bhagat Lakhshman Singh, published with Foreword by Sir Jogindra Singh in the year 1923⁵ had all the Sikh martyrs right from the crown of martyrs : Guru Arjan, the 5th Sikh Guru, the compiler of the Adi Guru Granth to the unknown martyrs, Baba Ram Singh Bedi of village Kotli Fakir Chand, District Sialkot (now in Pakistan). But the name of Banda Singh Bahadur who sacrificed his life at the call of Guru Gobind Singh for whom even contemporary critical writers like Khafi Khan who called names to the Sikh Gurus and Sikhs had abundance of praise⁶, is not there. It is, therefore, very significant to find out causes of this apathy and indifference of the Sikhs towards this great hero.

The main factors of this discrimination against this hero was Rattan Singh Bhangu's account of Banda Singh Bahadur's downfall written more than hundred years after the event. His faulty account was responsible for the downgrading of this valiant fighter.

Prachin Panth Parkash, as the work of Rattan Singh Bhangu is called, was completed in 1841 AD in the Bunga of Sham Singh near Golden Temple, Amritsar. The famous Mahtab Singh of Mirankot district, Amritsar was his paternal grandfather and Sham Singh of Karorsinghia Misl was his maternal grandfather.⁷ His work is considered one of the main source of information of 18th century history of the Sikhs after Banda Singh Bahadur.

According to Rattan Singh, Banda Singh's own victories were ascribed to the occult powers of Banda Singh which had been bestowed upon him by Guru Gobind Singh.⁸

No doubt Banda Singh Bahadur had the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh who gave five arrows and Hukamnamahs in the name

of the Sikhs of different localities. But it will be wrong to state that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon him the occult powers as has been stated by Rattan Singh Bhangu in his *Panth Parkash*. Use of occult powers is a taboo in Sikhism. It has been clearly stated in the *Adi Guru Granth* 'Without thy Name, in vain are robes and dishes and accursed is the saintliness and the super-natural powers'.⁹ In the words of Bhai Gurdas, Guru Nanak told Sidhas, 'Without God's name, we have no miracle.'¹⁰ Rattan Singh himself has written the reply of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the Mughal officials in the following words, 'Miracle is synonymous to the curse of God. Hence we do not perform miracles.'¹¹

With Guru Gobind Singh's blessings, Banda Singh Bahadur proved to be one of the greatest military generals of his times. It was no mean an achievement to face the army of mighty Mughal Empire and carve out an independent state when the Mughal power was at its zenith. Banda Singh Bahadur knew that he could not win over the well trained and well equipped Mughal army. Therefore, he after issuing the Hukamnamahs of Guru Gobind Singh to Majha, Doaba and Malwa, the Sikhs took a circuitous route.¹² Sirhind is hardly fifty miles from Samana (in modern Patiala District) which he had conquered. He turned to Shahbad, Sadhaura, Kapuri etc. He was waiting for the arrival of Sikhs from Majha, Doaba and Malwa and all these met the Banda Singh's army near Banur where Wazir Khan, Governor of Sirhind had brought a huge army to intercept the Union of Sikh armies. Banda Singh was however, successful to effect the union. The battle of Chappar Chirhi was fought.¹³

The treatment of Banda Singh Bahadur's account in the *Prachin Panth Parkash* is a bit different from the rest of the book. In the *Panth Parkash*, Rattan Singh has stated that he was given the narration as was told by his ancestors. This has been repeated at several places. But in the case of account of Banda Singh Bahadur, no indication has been given relating to the reliable source of information. He writes, whatever he heard he stated 'Jo suni so din aakh'.¹⁴ Unbelievable miraculous accounts have been given relating to Banda Singh.

Banda Singh Bahadur has been described in the prison of Raja of Kulu and he was in cage. With cage he flew from Kulu to Chamba state.¹⁵ In the Chamba state Banda is said to have performed another miracle- he crossed a fast running stream while sitting on the horseback and his horse was strutting on the surface of the fast flowing water.¹⁶ Such narration gives the impression that these have been written on the basis of hearsay or rumours.

In the later half of 18th century, *Prachin Panth Parkash* narrates so many events relating to Sikhs which get corroborated from Persian sources. For instance of Adina Beg invited the Sikhs and Marathas to conquer Sirhind in 1758 AD. The Sikhs were the first to enter Sirhind and Marathas entered later after a day or so.¹⁷ This information of Rattan Singh Bhangu gets confirmation from *Tazkara-i-Imadul-Mulk* where it has been stated that the Sikhs were the first to enter Sirhind. Another example may be given here. After the death of Suraj Mal, Jat of Bharatpur, his son Jawahar Singh sought the help of Sikhs to avenge the death of his father. How Jawahar Singh came to khalsa : Their help has been described by Rattan Singh.¹⁸ Almost similar account has been given by Nuruddin, the author of *Ahwal-i-Najib-ud-Daula* which has been translated into English by Prof. Shaikh Abdul Rashid of Aligarh Muslim University.¹⁹

It is strange that account of Banda Singh Bahadur's downfall by Rattan Singh gets confirmation from no other source whatsoever.

Rattan Singh stated, 'the Mughal government pressurised Mata Sundari, wife of Guru Gobind Singh to write a letter to Banda Singh Bahadur when Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind and Shames Khan, Subedar of Jalandhar had been killed by the Sikh forces under Banda Singh Bahadur. At that time, nobody was willing to face Banda Singh Bahadur as there was a rumour afoot that Banda was going to attack Delhi, Multan and Peshawar etc. The Mughals in Delhi thought of a plan that the family of Guru Gobind Singh was in Delhi and they should approach her to prevent Banda from creating trouble. In case she did not agree she should be arrested. Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar agreed to this plan. He called Bhai Nand Lal, the famous poet of Guru Gobind Singh and asked him to persuade Mata Sundari

to write letter to Banda Singh Bahadur ordering him to stop fighting and surrender himself. The Emperor also suggested that the Mughal government would give subsistence to Banda Singh Bahadur for life'.²⁰ According to Rattan Singh 'Mataji agreed and asked Bhai Nand Lal to write a letter on her behalf. When Banda received this letter advising him to surrender, he declined and told the messenger that Mughals would exterminate the race of the Sikhs if he surrendered at that time. This reply of Banda was conveyed to the Mughal Emperor who announced the same in his court. This led to the division among the Sikhs into two sections. Mataji cursed Banda Singh Bahadur for acting against the wishes of Guru Gobind Singh.'²¹ The charges against him were that he married a princess of Chamba. He introduced Fateh Darshan instead of Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa and Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh, and not obeying orders of Mataji.

This account of Rattan Singh does not stand the scrutiny of historical investigation. Bhai Nand Lal who is said to have persuaded Mata Sundari to write letter to Banda Singh, died earlier. According to Dastur-ul-Insha, Bhai Nand Lal died in 1713 AD at Multan.²² Encyclopaedia of Sikhism and Kulyat-i-Bhai Nand Lal also give the same date of his death.²³ All account agree that Bhai Nand Lal died in 1713 AD in Multan. The Emperor Farrukhsiyar entered Delhi as a Mughal Emperor on 12th February 1713 AD.²⁴ Bhai Nand Lal could not be at Delhi in the year 1713, 1714 and 1715 because all accounts are of the view that Bhai Nand Lal spent his last years of his life at Multan where he had opened a school and he died in 1713 AD three years before the death of Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716 AD.

All the Hukamnamahs written by Mata Sundariji are available and had been published by Punjabi University, Patiala and edited by Dr. Ganda Singh. Nowhere we find any Hukamnamahs of Mata Sundari addressed to Banda Singh Bahadur. First available Hukamanamah of Mata Sundari is dated 1717 about a year after the death of Banda Singh Bahadur.²⁵ According to Das Guru Mahal, Mata Sundariji during the years of the rising of Banda Singh Bahadur, had migrated to Mathura after leaving her residence inside Ajmeri

Gate, Delhi where she used to live.²⁶ After her stay in Mathura, she came to Delhi to live near Turkman Gate. A Gurdwara at this site has also been erected in the name of Mata Sundariji.

Under these circumstances the writing of letter to Banda Singh Bahadur by Bhai Nand Lal on behalf of Mataji does not appear to be correct. Hence the question of Banda's disobedience to Mataji does not rise.

Another charge against Banda Singh Bahadur is that he married the princess of Chamba against the wishes of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Gobind Singh could not forbid him to marry because marriage is not a taboo in Sikhism. Rather Bhai Gurdas had stated that household life is best mode of life for following Sikhism (Sarv Dharam Main Garihast Hi Pardhan Hai). Nowhere we find Guru Gobind Singh advising anyone not to lead household life. Guru Gobind Singh could not give such instructions to Banda Singh Bahadur as this was against the tenets of Sikhism.

With regard to Fateh Darshan - that was never continued during the life of Banda Singh Bahadur. It was abandoned. Moreover, it is not Fateh Darshan, it is Fateh Darshni. In Persian, Fateh Darshani means that Fateh which is uttered at the time of Darshan, that was not such a serious thing which could warrant punishment.

In this way it is clear that Banda Singh Bahadur was wrongly blamed. Instead of appreciating his great sacrifices he had made, he had been maligned and disgraced by those people who did not agree with him on one account or the other.

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Presidential Address

Prof. Dilbag Singh*

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kirpal Singh, Dr. Sukhdial Singh and distinguished friends, it is an honour and privilege for me to be invited to chair the Seminar on "*Banda Singh Bahadur on The Canvas of History*". I am aware of my limitations as Punjab History is not my area of specialization or research.

The Sikhs became prominent in the Punjab region under Guru Gobind Singh Ji's leadership and they are also credited to have challenged the mighty Mughal Empire, ultimately paving the way for its collapse. Among the successor states of the 18th century India the Sikhs were one of the most successful powers of the period. There is an extremely rich historiography on the processes of state formation under the Sikhs. The disintegration of the Mughal empire and rise of the Sikh power are the dominant themes in major historical writings on 18th Century India

The emergence of the Sikhs as a political power in the Punjab during the 18th century has received wide scholarly attention. Yet the question arises as to how to visualise this entire phenomenon, particularly in view of the varying perceptions that we witness in the historical writings representing Mughal, Sikh and European perspectives. This issue becomes more complicated given the fact that contemporary historical accounts are written by the Mughal

court historians and officials (news writers) and the biasness in their narratives in the context of the Mughal-Sikh relations is obvious. The Mughals had their own agenda to portray a history of the time in a particular hue. Their own concerns indisputably influenced their perception of the role of different sets of people who dared challenged the Mughal authority or questioned the legitimacy of their rule. The result is that often the image that we get in the Mughal accounts of all forms of resistance to the Mughal authority is negative. Protest is taken as rebellion, rebelliousness and their synonyms are the most damning language of abuse in Mughal Court literature. These acts are, as per the Mughal perception, condemnable, questionable representing the forces of disorderliness. Defeating rebels becomes a cleansing operation. Even for Abul Fazal, the rebellious are not merely the ones who defied imperial authority, they defied the divine destiny manifest in history's teleology. Therefore the language of these writings needs to be understood and interpreted keeping in mind this specific context. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Sikh movement under Banda Singh Bahadur is portrayed as chaos and turbulence. The other point which is to be noted in this connection is that since historian's own perception rather than the source by itself, by and large determine the selection and interpretation of sources used, it becomes rather unavoidable to brand any particular approach, interpretation of sources used and generalisations made as Mughal-centric, Euro-Centric, Rajput, Maratha or Sikh-Centric and so on. The deliberate or not so deliberate choice of sources by historians leaves even what is available largely hidden from the audience of history. There is then no alternative to revisiting the sources which can not be identified with any finality once for all. This also raises the question of the perception of the Sikhs and Banda Singh Bahadur in Persian and non-Persian sources. While working out the future agenda for our history writing we need to have an awareness of its current constraints to start with. I sincerely hope that this seminar will definitely help us in having a balanced vision of the forces involved in the contest for power.

The other point that I would like to raise concerns the 18th century. 18th century in our history has particular importance as it is considered to be an end of the era which were generally identified as medieval while it also saw evident signs of the beginning of the modern period. I am not going here into the debates and questions regarding 18th century. What is significant in this context is that among groups of Indian people whose role and presence are very much pronounced were also the Sikhs. In Banda Singh Bahadur's movement we get many insights into the processes of the formation of the Sikh state. One of the most striking features of the Sikh political movement is the source of its legitimacy. Banda Singh seeks legitimacy for the Sikh political power in the name of social justice, i.e. the Sikhs were fighting against an oppressive and tyrannical state and its collaborators rather than the Muslims as such. This particular feature of the Sikh movement distinguishes it from the other popular movements. Unlike the Marathas, the Sikhs did not try to give religious or communal colour to their struggle with the Mughal state. Nor did Banda try to seek political or military support in the name of religion. I disagree with my friend and former colleague Muzaffar Alam who suggests that Banda Singh attempted to give his struggle against the Mughals the colour of a *dharam yuddha* to protect the Hindu interests against Muslim tyranny. In this context he refers to the reported attempt of some of Banda's Sikh Sardars to invite Jai Singh Sawai of Amber to march towards the Punjab and asked him to give a call to the "Hindus" to join the Sikhs and defend *dharma*. Muzaffar Alam misunderstood the concept of *Dharma Yuddha* employed in Banda's discourse. In Banda's discourse, righteousness is the essence of and not a narrow concept of defence and protection of Hindu interests. He sees Banda's attempt to make use of the religious susceptibilities of the Hindus against the background of Aurangzeb's policies and observes that as a shrewd leader Banda might have calculated on cashing in on the bruised feelings of a section of the Hindus. By the same logic Banda would have also known about the futile attempts of the Marathas to win over the Rajputs in the name of religion. However,

we do get a different picture about the attitudes of the Rajputs towards the Mughal-Sikh affairs.

I have seen around 50 documents in the form of Vakil reports and *Arzdashta* which cover such aspects as the activities of the Sikhs under Banda Bahadur, attempts of the Mughals to suppress Banda, the role of hill Rajas in the Mughal-Sikh conflict and attitude of Raja Ajit Singh of Jodhpur and Jai Singh of Amber towards the Mughals in their conflict against the Sikhs. These detailed reportages also contain views of the Vakils on the issue of Rajput Rajas joining hands with the Mughals against Banda. The Raja's Vakil who was entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the interests of his master at the Mughal court, tried very hard to convince the Raja that it is in his interest to join the Imperial camp and participate in the Mughal campaigns against the Sikhs but without any success.

References to Banda Bahadur and the Sikhs in the Vakil reports and *Arzdashta* originated initially in the context of the seriousness of Banda's movement in the Punjab and Bahadur Shah's anxiety to involve Ajit Singh and Jai Singh in his campaign against Banda Singh.

How the Sikhs are mentioned in Rajasthani documents Amber Vakil, Chhabil Das refers to Guru Tyagmal as successor of Guru Nanak and his association with Raja Ram Singh Kachhawa. He also mentions that Guru Gobind Singh fought several battles against Aurangzeb and was accidentally got killed by a Pathan. He informs Raja Jai Singh that Sikhs are becoming powerful every day. In all the reports Banda Singh is termed as Guru. Further he informs about Guru's fight with Jalal Khan and Wazir Khan. In yet another report he informs his master that power of the Sikhs is growing and that Ajit Singh, son of Guru Gobind Singh and his followers were in Delhi. He also suggested that it is worth considering to remain on friendly terms with the Sikhs.

The other two vakils who wrote regularly to Sawai Jai Singh about Banda Singh Bahadur's activities and efforts on the part of the Mughals to subdue the Sikhs were Diwan Bhikhari Das and Pancholi Jagjivan Ram. In all the reports that were dispatched to the Raja, the Vakil made a clear distinction between established facts

and rumours. The Vakil furnished information about Banda Singh's exploits and spatial movements, attempts of the Mughals to arrest the growth of Sikh power in the Punjab and the role of the hill chiefs, particularly the Rajas of Nahan and Jammu in the Mughal-Sikh conflict. How the Mughal-Sikh conflict was viewed by a section among the Rajputs is also evident from the Vakil reports.

The Vakil refers to Banda Singh's fight with Mohd. Amin Khan and Rustam Dil Khan and his escape to Jammu territory where he was opposed by the Jammu Raja. While fighting, Banda Singh inflicted serious injury on him. He also reported that the Guru and the Sikhs have become very powerful in Lahore area; they have killed Shams Khan and Bazid Khan along with 1500 horsemen. For fear of the Guru the people of Batala have fled away leaving behind property worth crore of rupees. He reported that Rustam Dil Khan has informed the emperor that the Sikhs are creating much disturbance in Lahore. The Vakil reported to the Raja from his base at Kalanaur that the Guru has sent an army against Hamid Khan who could not face him in the absence of royal artillery. Further he reported that the Guru after defeating the Mughal army has gone into the hills and Mohd. Amin Khan and Rustam Dil Khan are pursuing the Guru who has now gone towards Bareilly.

The Vakil also informs about the Guru's escape to Nahan and arrest of Shyam Singh Khatri, the Diwan of Nahan who is referred to as *Guru Ka Sikh*. He was insulted at the Mughal court and compelled to undertake that he would produce Banda Singh. The Vakil also reported about arrest of the Raja of Nahan and his humiliation so as to force him to find out Banda Singh and produce him and that the Raja's mother has undertaken to produce the Banda Singh as soon as the weather improves. In subsequent reports he informed Jai Singh about Banda Singh's fight with Nahan Raja and Rajas of adjacent territories. He also reported about the killing of inhabitants of villages for helping Banda Singh. Reluctance of the Rathore Rajputs to proceed to Punjab is also evident from the report of Bhikhari Das who wrote to Jai Singh that the Rathors of Jodhpur are not in favour of two Rajas, Jai Singh and Ajit Singh joining the

Imperial army to fight against Banda Singh. They are holding the view that the emperor is loosing his prestige and ruining himself in the pursuit of a Fakir.

He informed Jai Singh that the emperor wants both the Rajas to reach Satluj to punish Banda Singh, otherwise they would not be offered any post. Raja Ajit Singh was instructed to reach Dabar and kill the Guru, thereafter all his demands would be considered.

The point I would like to make is that appropriate references to the Sikhs and Banda Singh viewed in chronological order and their contextual occurrences may generate fresh questions and perspectives. Similarly the use or non-use of particular words for the Sikhs are also indicative of attitudes. So far as the Rajputs are concerned they had no illusions regarding the seriousness of Banda Singh Bahadur's challenge to the Mughal empire. They took note of the unsuccessful attempts of the Mughals to curb the growing power of the Sikhs under Banda Singh Bahadur's leadership and despair among the Mughals over the exploits of the Sikhs. Reluctance of the Rajputs to join hands with the Mughals in their anti Sikh campaigns notwithstanding, persistent attempts on part of the Mughals is indicative of the attitude of the Rajputs who visualized the Sikhs as one of the serious and powerful contenders for political space.

It is the other side of the picture that we need to get from hitherto unavailable or neglected sources. This might lead us to reformulate some of the older questions thereby helping us to evolve relatively balanced perspectives on the origin of the Sikh power.

I thank again the organizers of the seminar for giving me the honour to chair this seminar.

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Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla

(Mughal Court News-letters relating to the Punjab,
A.D. 1707-1718)

Translated and edited by

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The Mughal Emperors had an elaborate system for the collection of news from all over the country through a net-work of official newswriters called *waqai-nawis*, *waqai-nigar*, *akhbar-nawis*, etc., who sent their news-sheets to the imperial capital where a regular department functioned for the compilation of the day-to-day news of the kingdom. In a consolidated form, these *akhbars* were presented to the Emperor to obtain his orders thereon.

The news-letters called the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* were not exclusively the news of the imperial court as the title would suggest but were generally the summaries of the news submitted to the Emperor.

The representatives of the various states and provinces of the country stationed at the capital passed on these news to their respective masters. There is an invaluable stock of such news lying in manuscript form in Persian at Jaipur now partly transferred to Bikaner.

Dr. Ganda Singh examined these Mughal news preserved at Jaipur in September and December, 1944 and January, 1945 through the courtesy of Sardar Teja Singh, then Chief Engineer in Jaipur and Mr. B. N. Timani, the Superintendent of the Old Historical Records Department.¹ As he was mainly interested in the Punjab news with particular reference to the Sikhs, he selected and copied these alone. This manuscript now preserved in his personal collection at Patiala comprises 220 foolscap pages beginning with the ninth year of Aurangzeb's reign to the seventh of Farrukh Siyar's. In the *akhbars* of Aurangzeb's period there are big gaps of time. But in the *akhabars* of Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar, there are much smaller gaps in most of the cases only of days.

This English version of the news mainly relates to the political affairs of the Punjab about the time of Aurangzeb's death and the anti-Mughal armed movement spearheaded by the people of the Punjab under the direction and command of Banda Singh Bahadur. It throws a flood of light on the day-to-day activities of the Sikh movement with effect from 1708 and the Delhi Emperor's all-out efforts to crush it. More than anything else the Emperor was frightfully seized of the Punjab problems for years together. The magnitude of the mobilization of the state machinery against the 'rebels' of the Punjab and the Emperor's deep concern about them cannot be properly appreciated without the study of this work.

An effort has been made to keep the English version as close to the Persian text as possible. The Hijri dates given of the news have been converted into the dates of Christian era.

At places the news-writers have been victim of grave misunderstandings. Banda Singh has been mentioned in the *akhbars* as Guru, Gobind, Guru Gobind and Guru Gobind Singh and strangely enough the mistake persisted throughout the period of his political activity for nearly seven years. As it is known to every one, Banda Singh was not a Guru of the Sikhs but only their political leader nominated by Guru Gobind Singh.

There are many entries (as under the news dated October 30, 1708; September 26, 1710; December 27, 1710 and December 30,

1711) about Ajit Singh who has been mentioned therein as the 'son of Guru Gobind Singh.' But this Ajit Singh was not the son of Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru's eldest son Ajit Singh had been killed in the battle of Chamkaur Sahib in December 1705. Ajit Singh of *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* was the son of a goldsmith brought up by Mata Sundari, the widow of Guru Gobind Singh, and was so named by her in the memory of her martyred son, the real Ajit Singh. The adopted Ajit Singh had to be disclaimed and disinherited by her because of his lack of due regard for her sentiments and wishes. He was killed during the reign of Muhammad Shah in 1722 on a wrongful allegation of abetment of murder of a Muslim mendicant.

In order to have a clearer idea of the Sikh movement under Banda Singh Bahadur in the context of the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* a brief but consistent account of the activities of this Sikh hero from 1708 to 1716, to which this manuscript mainly relates, is necessary.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs soon developed into a political power under the leadership of Banda Singh who came to the Punjab, not as Guru but as commander of the Khalsa.² Before Banda Singh's departure from the Deccan the Guru bestowed upon him a drum and a flag as emblems of temporal authority and five arrows³ from his own quiver. He was blessed with victory provided he considered himself to be a comrade, a servant of the Khalsa with whom would rest in future the supreme authority of the community. Persons like Binod Singh, Kahan Singh, Baj Singh, Daya Singh and Ram Singh,⁴ who were to assist him in his activities and future programme, accompanied him to the Punjab.

Arriving in northern India Banda Singh despatched the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh to prominent Sikhs in the Punjab.⁵ His main target, to begin with, was Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind, the killer of Guru Gobind Singh's young sons.⁶ The cold-blooded murder of the innocent children of the Guru had given the Sikhs a shock and they were burning with rage against him. The leading Sikhs of the Punjab, Bhai Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh, Nagahia Singh, Aali Singh and Mali Singh, flocked round him

along with their followers. According to Khafi Khan, in two or three months' time, four or five thousand horsemen and seven or eight thousand foot-soldiers joined him and their number soon rose to 40,000.⁷

There were three types of men that had rallied round Banda Singh. Firstly, there were those Sikhs who had previously been with Guru Gobind Singh and were always ready to fight with a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice. The second category comprised those who had been supplied by persons like Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phul family and the third category constituted those who had flocked to them for the sake of plunder and booty.⁸ Those of the last category, the mercenaries, were mainly responsible for indiscriminate murders and plunder. Being without any leader they had no discipline in their ranks. They were not always reliable, and they constituted the majority of Banda Singh's followers. After the plunder of a place they would go home to unburden themselves of the booty and join again whenever they felt like doing so.⁹ Whenever they found a situation fraught with danger they would slowly melt away. So before launching upon some big enterprise, Banda Singh had always to be sure of his force.

Places like Samana, Ghurham, Thaska and Shahabad fell without resistance. The battle against Wazir Khan of Sirhind, the murderer of the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh¹⁰ was fought on the plain of Chappar-Chiri on May 12, 1710 and he was killed. The Khalsa flag was hoisted on the fort of Sirhind.¹¹ Baj Singh, the leader of the Trans Satluj Sikhs, was appointed governor of Sirhind, with Aali Singh, the leader of the Cis-Satluj Sikhs as his deputy.¹² Fateh Singh was made the governor of Samana and Ram Singh was posted to Thanesar as its governor jointly with Binod Singh.¹³

As the Sikhs had been feeling very sore about Wazir Khan's role in the harassment of Guru Gobind Singh, their action at Sirhind was evidently instigated by a spirit of revenge. But the Muslim writers have given exaggerated accounts of the Sikhs. "The *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin* and also the *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* contain terrible details of the atrocious deeds of the Sikhs," writes Thornton, "but a

Muhammadan writer is not to be implicitly trusted upon such a point."¹⁴ Later writers like Mohammad Latif¹⁵ had blindly followed the statements of Ghulam Husain Khan and Khafi Khan.

The victory at Sirhind added to the enthusiasm of the Sikhs. Banda Singh was told that Jalal Khan and Ali Hamid Khan, the *faujdar*s of Deoband and Saharanpur, were harassing the Sikh converts there. He repaired to that part of the country and addressed a letter¹⁶ to Jalal Khan to release the Sikhs who had been taken prisoners by him and submit to the authority of the Khalsa. Far from accepting this demand, the Sikh messengers were mounted on asses, paraded through the streets of Jalalabad and then turned out of the town.¹⁷ Jalalabad and Saharanpur were, therefore, attacked. The Sikhs were reinforced by the Gujjar¹⁸ peasants who had suffered long at the hands of the Sheikhzadas of Saharanpur. It assumed the form of a class struggle with the tenants on one side and the *zamindars* on the other. In the bloody fighting about three hundred Sheikhzadas fell dead in the court-yard of Sheikh Muhammad Afzal alone.

Now the Sikhs addressed a letter to Shamas Khan, the *faujdar* of Jullundur, calling upon him to effect some reforms and to personally hand over his treasury to the Khalsa. In reply he declared a *jehad* or crusade against the Sikhs. According to Khafi Khan¹⁹ more than a hundred thousand Muslims, mostly weavers, were assembled and they were marched from Sultanpur. In addition to these, Shamas Khan could muster four or five thousand horse and thirty thousand foot. And Khafi Khan, writes that the Sikhs had seventy to eighty thousand horse and foot (the number is obviously an inflated one). No doubt in the flush of victory of large number of Hindus also joined the forces of Banda Singh to reap the benefits and enjoy the fruits of the success over their Mughal master.²⁰ Many of the spirited and daring Hindus adopted Sikhism.²¹ After a few days the Muslims dispersed and the Sikhs got an easy control over Jullunder and Hoshiarpur. This was done during the last quarter of the year 1710. Banda Singh then turned his attention to Batala and Kalanaur and some other Sikh leaders occupied the *pargana* of Pathankot.²² Then

the Sikhs went very close to the walls of Lahore and a little later a part of the territory of Majha and Riarki also came under the Sikh control.²³

Now the Sikhs became the masters of the territory of the Punjab that lay to the east of Lahore. "There was no noble-man daring enough to march from Delhi against them."²⁴ In the words of Malcolm. "If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Deccan, which he did in 1710 there is every reason to think that the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these... invaders."²⁵ Emperor Bahadur Shah had the bearded Sikhs always on his nerves. On 8th September, 1710, the Emperor issued an order that "all Hindus employed in the imperial offices should get their beards shaved." And again on the 10th December, 1710 (29th Shawwal, 1122 Hijri), the Emperor issued an edict ordering a wholesale genocide of the Sikhs - the worshippers of Nanak - wherever found, saying : "*Nanak prastan.ra har ja kih ba-yaband ba-qatl rasanand.*"²⁶ This order was later repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar in almost the same words.

Emperor Bahadur Shah personally came to the Punjab to deal with the Sikhs. The imperial forces attackd Lohgarh (the iron castle), the capital of Banda Singh's government at Mukhlispur at the foot of the Shivalik hills to the east of Sadhaura.²⁷ Khaf Khan writes, "It is impossible for me to describe the fight which followed. The Sikhs in their *fakirs*' dress struck terror into the royal troops. The number of the dead and the dying of the imperialists was so large that for a time it appeared as if they were going to lose."²⁸ But Banda Singh finding it difficult to stand against the imperial forces, slipped away from Lohgarh under the cover of darkness. He went to Mandi and from there to Chamba.

Thereafter, Banda Singh attacked Jammu, Raipur, Bahrampur, Kalanaur and Batala. He was victorious everywhere but the occupation of these places was only short-lived.

Banda Singh was driven to take asylum in the enclosure of Duni Chand at the village of Gurdas Nangal. The Sikhs there were so closely besieged that 'not a blade of grass or a grain of corn' could find its way into that enclosure, The besiegers wanted to starve the Sikhs into submission. 'The Sikhs were with blistered feet and

empty hands (without provisions) but they displayed every type of bravery and intrepidity.²⁹ Muhammad Qasim, the author of the *Ibratnama*, who was an eye witness to these operations, writes that such was the terror of these people and the fear of the sorceries of their chief that commanders of the royal army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek his safety in flight from the *garhi* (fortress).³⁰

Ultimately Banda Singh, along with his companions, was captured on the 7th December, 1715. They were ordered by the Emperor to be brought to Delhi on camels with disgrace and humiliation.³¹ Zakariya Khan feeling the numbers of prisoners to be too small, roped in more from the villages on the way until the number of prisoners rose to about 800 and of the heads hoisted on spears to 2,000. Besides, seven hundred cart-loads of the Sikh heads also accompanied the gruesome show.³² The prisoners were executed at Delhi. As if insensitive to the pains of death, they would calmly offer their necks to the executioner's sword and drink the cup of martyrdom with the name of God '*Wahe Guru, Wahe Guru*, on their lips.³³

They refused reprieve contemptuously whenever offered. To them their cause was dearer than their lives.³⁵ The Sikhs showed utter disregard of death. When they were told about their fate they said that if they had been afraid of death they could never have fought against such heavy odds. Fear was a thing unknown to them.³⁶

It is said that the Emperor asked Banda Singh as to how he should be killed. The latter replied that he might be killed in the manner in which the Emperor proposed death for himself.³⁷ This shows Banda Singh's faith in ultimate victory of the Sikhs. Banda Singh was executed on June 9, 1716, along with his suckling son,³⁸ in the neighbourhood of the *dargah* (mausoleum) of Hazrat Khwaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki³⁹ near Mehraulli, Delhi. In the words of Elphinstone Banda Singh died "glorying in having been raised up by God to be the scourge to the iniquities and oppression of the age."⁴⁰

Banda Singh shook one of the mightiest empires in the world to its very foundations with such terrible violence that it was never to reestablish its authority as firmly as before.

Khushwant Singh has remarked that “the movement to infuse the sentiment of Punjabi nationalism in the masses received a setback with Banda Singh.⁴¹ But where was that movement of Punjabi nationalism? Nationalism of Khushwant Singh's conception is a much later idea. Banda Singh reiterated the Sikhs' determination of not taking the government policy of repression lying down and made a bid for the liberation of the land from their oppressive masters.

During the days of his successes Banda Singh was almost irresistible in the eastern Punjab. Normally the result of his achievements should have been the establishment of a personal monarchy with coins and seals engraved in his name. But that is what he did not do. He did establish a new state, no doubt, but he ruled not in his own name but in the name of the *Khalsa* and the *Guru*. According to Rattan Singh Bhangu, “The Guru had enjoined upon Banda to serve the *Panth*. And it was not he but the collective Sikh community that was blessed with the sovereignty by the *Sacha Padshah* (Guru Gobind Singh)”⁴² Banda Singh proved equal to the responsibility entrusted to him and he abided by his master's instructions.

Banda Singh assumed royal authority, issued coins introduced an official seal and a new calendar dating from the capture of Sirind.⁴³ His coins, however, bore the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh

*Sikka zad bar har do alam Tegh-i-Nanak wahib ast,
Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan Fazal-i-Sacha Sahib
ast*

(By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds.

The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons and the victory is of Guru Gobind Singh, the king of kings).

And on the reverse of the coin was inscribed, “Struck in the city of peace, illustrating the beauty of civil life and the ornament of the blessed throne.”

He also introduced an official seal for state documents and letters patent. The inscription on the seal is expressive of a deep sense of devotion and loyalty to the Gurus :

Deg o-Tegh-o-Fateh-o-Nusrat-i-bedirang

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

The kettle and the sword (symbols of service and power), victory and ready patronage have been obtained from the Gurus, Nanak and Gobind Singh.

He thus not only acknowledged the patronage of the great masters but also took upon himself the duty of serving the people through *deg* and *tegh*, the cauldron and the sword, the symbols of feeling the hungry and protecting the weak and helpless.

Ganda Singh's remark that 'with the establishment of his power Banda Singh assumed regal state'⁴⁴ presumably means that the Sikhs under Banda Singh established a state of their own.

In his letter of 12th December, 1710, addressed to the Sikhs of Jaunpur, Banda Singh writes, "The Guru will protect you. Call upon the Guru's name. On seeing the letter repair to my presence, wearing five arms. Observe the rules of conduct laid down for the Khalsa.... We have brought about the golden age (*satya yuga*). Love one another. This is my wish. He who lives according to the rules of the Khalsa shall be saved by the Guru."⁴⁵

This is very significant letter indeed, giving us a peep into Banda Singh's polity. He strongly recommends that the conduct of the Sikhs, the Khalsa, in the liberated country, was to be in strict conformity with the principles laid down by Guru Gobind Singh at the time of their initiation ceremony into the order of the Khalsa. He pointed out that the golden age had been ushered in. He meant to tell the people at large that a welfare state of their dreams had been established to the exclusion of the tyrannical government of the Mughal governors. He tacitly meant to convey to them that unjust officials had been substituted by the just, deserving and competent persons who could appreciate the aspirations of the oppressed and wronged people. He wanted to make them alive to the consciousness created in the masses for their rights and awaken them to a strong sense of resistance and defiance to oppression.

So, despite the fact that Banda Singh seemed almost like a king, with a capital at Lohgarh and an army standing at his beck and

call, and palatial buildings for him to live in, the erroneous view held by some writers that he had tried to assume kingly power personally to the neglect of the Khalsa is not in consonance with the wishes of the last Guru to whom he ascribed all his success and with his own as expressed in the *hukamnama* mentioned above.

Banda Singh could not get enough time to be able to evolve a concrete form of government. One measure which influenced the future fiscal history of the Punjab was the liquidation of the *zamindari* system. The Mughal *zamindars* or landlords were responsible for the payment of fixed amount of land revenue from the villages entrusted to them. They extorted from the peasants any amount they liked and the government did not interfere, with the result that the poor farmers were reduced to the position of slaves. On Banda Singh's suggestion⁴⁶ the tillers of soil ejected the landlords and the peasants themselves became the masters of their lands. Large estates were broken into smaller holdings in the hands of the Sikh or Hindu peasants. These agrarian changes to a great extent ameliorated the lot of the poor peasantry.

With victory coming to the Sikhs, they began to be looked upon as defenders of the faith and the protectors of the land. Banda Singh's brief rule gave the Sikhs a foretaste of independence and from that time onwards they could not be satisfied with anything short of the emancipation of their territory from the Mughal yoke, in pursuit of which they launched a ceaseless struggle against the Mughal government of the Punjab, and, later, against the Afghan usurpers from the Indus.

During the short span of Banda Singh's rule, there was both a political as well as social revolution in the Punjab which has been well summed up by William Irvine saying that, "in all the *parganas* occupied by the Sikhs the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation had only to leave home and join the Guru (meaning Banda) when in a short time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries the well-born and wealthy

went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders. ... Not a soul dared to disobey an order and men who had often risked themselves in battle-field became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate."⁴⁷

Banda Singh ousted the Mughal officers from the various *parganas* of Sirhind division and put his own men in their places.⁴⁸ Hindu *qanungos* and *amils* that had been replaced by Muslims under Aurangzeb were dismissed and the jobs of the displaced Hindus were restored to them.⁴⁹

Banda Singh took pride in being called the master's slave and always exhorted the Sikhs to follow the tenets and injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh.⁵⁰ His conforming to the conduct of the Khalsa has been confirmed by Ghulam Husain also.⁵¹

Banda Singh had received baptism of the Khalsa from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh and throughout his life remained a staunch believer of the Guru's mission. He followed with perfect strictness the Sikh rules of conduct. He used to point out to his officials that, "according to the Holy *Granth* the best worship for a ruler is to be just.If you call yourselves Sikhs of the Great Man (Guru Gobind Singh) do not do any thing that is sinful, irreligious or unjust. Advance the cause of true Sikhism and smite those who behave in an un-Sikh manner."⁵² Besides his love for justice this also shows his devotion and attachment to the code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh.

Banda Singh had converted a large number of Hindus and Muslims to Sikhism but he does not seem to have used any force to propagate his religion. Some people might have joined the Sikh fold to escape punishment for their former misdeeds or to promote their prospects of livelihood.⁵³ Throughout the history of the Sikhs it has been a glowing feature of the polity of various rulers to adopt a non-communal and tolerant policy towards those who agreed to be their subjects. Banda Singh was no exception to it. When he reached Kalanaur from Bahrapur, the Muslims of Kalanaur paid allegiance to him, and joined his forces. This seems to be the result of religious toleration shown to the Muslim population of the place.

A similar reference was made by Amīn-ud-Daulah in June 1710 that "the authority of that deluded sect (of the Sikhs) had reached such extremes that many Hindus and Muhammedans adopted their faith and ritual. Their chief (Banda Singh) captivated the hearts of all towards his inclinations and, whether a Hindu or a Muhammedan, whosever came into contact with him was addressed as a Singh. Accordingly Dindar Khan, a powerful ruler of the neighbourhood was named Dindar Singh and Mir Nasid-ud-Din, the official reporter of Sirhind, became Mir Nasir Singh. In the same way a large number of Muhammedans abandoned Islam and followed the misguided path (of Sikhism) and took solemn oaths and firm pledges to stand by Banda."⁵⁴

Thus we see that the policy of religious toleration preached by the Sikh Gurus was strictly followed by Banda Singh and was pursued by the Sikhs during their ensuing struggle. The Gurus had organised the Sikhs to defend their rights and secure freedom of worship, freedom of expression and freedom of missionary activities. If they had taken up arms it was purely with the object of self-defence. Banda Singh was the first to organise the Sikhs and to build a political power. He fought battles not only to weaken the Mughal power but also to replace it by a better one. He had, therefore, no alternative but to oust the Mughal government officials, appoint his own men, introduce changes in the government set-up and adopt a polity that aimed at fulfilling the aspirations of the Sikhs.

During Banda Singhs' period, "there was a revolution effected in the minds of the people, of which history often fails to take note. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause. The example set by Banda Singh and his companions in this respect was to serve them as a beacon light in the days to come. The idea of a national state, long dead, once again became a living aspiration and, although suppressed for the time being by relentless persecution, it went on working underground like a smouldering fire and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be suppressed again."⁵⁵

An article entitled, 'Analysis of the Liberation Movement under Banda Singh Bahadur against the Mughals' by Harpreet Kaur, relating to the present work, was published in the *Panjab Past and Present* in its issue of October 1983. Since the article was mainly based on the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*. I feel that reproducing here a portion of it would make this study more rewarding and fruitful. Enlightening and analytical observations made by Harpreet Kaur are as under :

The Sikh struggle under Banda Singh had strong social base in the villages. Therefore, we find a marked role of the peasants and *zamindars* in the activities of Banda Singh. As soon as he started his operations in the Punjab the *zamindars* promptly put trust in him and accepted him as their leader. At the instance of the *zamindars* hundreds and thousands of others rallied around him. During the entire period of their struggle against the Mughals, Banda Singh and his Sikhs could move almost unchecked in the major parts of the Punjab. The *zamindars* of the Punjab, mainly of the northern districts of Bari Doab, supplied arms and horses to Banda Singh and many of the hill chiefs of the Shivalik areas provided him shelter following the arrival of Bahadur Shah in the Punjab and the deployment against the Sikhs of the entire Mughal army of the northern province.

Despite the best efforts of the Mughal machinery to curb the activities of Banda Singh most of the villages of the region remained under his control till as late as the middle of 1714. The *faujdar* of Kangra had to set up special *chowkis* (outposts) to deal with the *zamindars* who collected food-grains and other provisions for the Sikhs. The *zamindar* of Kehlur had invariably rendered help to the Sikhs whenever they needed it. According to a news-letter an agreement was concluded between the Sikhs and the ruler of Kehlur that at the time of need the latter would provide asylum in his territory to the rebel Sikhs and block the passage of the royal forces. He always rose equal to the terms of agreement.⁵⁶ A little earlier news also confirms the association of the *zamindars* of Jammu and Kehlur with the Sikhs. The Sikhs had set up a few *chowkis* in the Kehlur hills so that during their fleeing nobody was able to obstruct their

way.⁵⁷ It had been again and again brought to the notice of the Emperor that most of the hill chiefs were sympathetic to Banda Singh and gave him every possible help. We find repeated mention of the *zamindars* of Kehlur and Srinagar-Garhwal (in letters dated June 13, 1712 and August 10, 1714); of Jammu (April 7, 1711); of Mandi (September 29, 1715); of Kulu (September 29, 1715); of Wadial (September 28, 1711); of Samana and Kaithal (July 6, 1710) to this effect.

During the sixth years of Bahadur Shah's reign, Farrukh Beg, the imperial messenger asked Feroz Khan Bahadur to secure the co-operation of the *zamindars* and send them to Khan Feroz Jang for the chastisement of the rebel Guru [Banda Singh]. The said Khan replied that the *zamindars* of the hill areas were associating themselves with the rebels and they were not responsive to their appeals.⁵⁸

It is clear from the above that when Banda Singh was obliged to find shelter in the Shivalik hills he could do it without difficulty. But it does not mean that there was no opposition from any of the *zamindars*. Besides the Muslim *zamindars* many Hindu chiefs also sided with the Mughals mainly with a view to escaping harassment at the hands of the government. In the early stages Bhup Parkash son of Hari Parkash, ruler of Nahan, sympathised with Banda Singh. He was called to Delhi and imprisoned. In order to prove their loyalty to the Emperor, Bhup Parkash's mother captured many Sikhs and sent them to Delhi for execution or imprisonment.⁵⁹ *Zamindars* of Kamaon vide letter dated August 26, 1710 and of Sirmur vide letter 3.12.1710, were against Banda Singh.

In the cis-Satluj areas in the *suba* of Delhi, the *chakla* of Sirhind was the second important region where Banda Singh had strong following. He launched his campaigns from Sirhind,⁶⁰ and also used this region as the base for his operations beyond the Jamuna in the *sarkar* of Sharanpur.⁶¹ It has been referred to earlier that the residents of the *chakla* of Sirhind were so much scared of the dangers of Banda Singh's total control over the region that they made an appeal to Emperor Jahandar Shah to allow them to accompany

the royal retinue to Delhi.⁶² In moments of difficulty when Banda Singh escaped into the hills he could depend on the supply of provisions from the *chakla* of Sirhind.

Banda Singh was pitted against a big host of enemies in the Punjab including the Bhattis, Kharals and Gujjars of Rachna Doab and Afghans of Kasur. The *zamindars* of Saharnpur, Shamas Khan, the *faujdar* of Bist Jullundur, and the Afghans are reported to have fought against the Sikhs in a number of battles in the Doab as well as the *chakla* of Sirhind. As is clear from references in the contemporary reports Banda Singh fought his way against the Mughal mainly with the help of Jat Sikh peasantry. Within a period of an year or so the strength of Banda Singh's army increased from four or five thousand horsemen and seven or eight thousand foot-soldiers to about 30 to 40 thousand men. During this period almost the whole of the *sarkar* and all of the *parganas* in the north of this *sarkar* (between the Satluj and the Jamuna) came into possession of the Sikhs.⁶³

The *banjaras* (a class of grain carriers) who moved about in all parts of the country in connection with their trading activities were very helpful to the Sikh movement in Punjab under Banda Singh. Most of them professed Sikhism and had devout faith in their religion. According to a news-letter forty *banjaras* who were Nanak-worshippers were brought to Delhi from the areas surrounding Multan. Sarbrah Khan, *Kotwal*, was ordered that if the *banjaras* did not accept to change their religion. They were ordered to be killed.⁶⁴ These *banjaras*, who were true to Sikhism and the Sikh movement in the Punjab, always tried to maintain the supply of provisions to the Sikhs even when they were besieged in a fort. The besieged threw off pieces of cloth from the top of the fort wall and the *banjaras* packed the grain, tied them up and then through the ropes the same were drawn up and taken inside the fort.⁶⁵ According to a news in the third year of Farrukh Siyar's reign as referred to earlier when Banda Singh along with his companions went in the direction of Bareilly and Moradabad, passing through the hills, he was supplied with the needed provisions by the *banjaras*.⁶⁶ We have

another very important news regarding the role of *banjaras* in the fourth year of Farrukh Siyar's rule. A news from the *chakla* of Kangra was submitted to the Emperor that most of the *banjaras* who were Nanak-worshippers were staying in the *taaluqas* of Heer Chand and Daya Dhamma and the *zamindars* of the Khalsa *mahal* (imperial lands). They acted as spies for the Sikh rebels and provided them with food grains, arrows and rifles. The Emperor was solicited to issued communications in the name of the *nazim* of Lahore, *qiladar* and *faujdar* of Kangra and *zamindars* of the hill territories that the *banjaras* should not be allowed to pass through their areas. If captured they should be punished and in this way the movement of the rebels and the supply of food grains of them would be restricted. The Emperor issued the necessary orders.⁶⁷ In the wake of Banda Singh's flight to the hills the imperialists had to encounter stiff resistance from the *banjaras*. Later it was reported that the *banjaras* ravaged a number of village there.

During the unequal struggle being waged by Banda Singh with his limited resources against the mighty Mughal power he was assisted secretly by many agencies as referred to above. Some of them provided him with food grains, arms and horses and some others gave him the information about the movement of the imperial forces. There are very significant entries in the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* regarding these facts. We have, in the fifth year of Bahadur Shah's rein, a report presented to him by Jagjiwan Dass, a *harkara*. The news reads, "Some people purchased horses and ammunition to be delivered to the Sikh rebels, and they carried the same through the Kohistan (hills). If somebody obstructed them they pretended that they were taking the same for the *zamindars* of that district. The Emperor ordered the investigation and the necessary action."⁶⁸

In another news it was reported to the Emperor that the Hindu *faqirs*, *yogis*, *sanyasis* and *bairagis* conveyed the imperial news to the rebel Guru (Banda Singh). The Emperor ordered that if that was proved in any case the alleged spy be murdered. He further ordered that Sarbrah Khan Kotwal should oust the Hindu *faqirs* from the imperial camp.⁶⁹

The bulk of Banda Singh's followers were the Jat Sikhs belonging to the villages or the rural Sikh community. According to Indu Bhusan Banerjee, Guru Arjun is said to have converted almost the entire Jat peasantry of the Majha tract and there could be little doubt that by the time of Guru Hargobind the Jats formed by far the preponderant element in the Sikh community. The character of the Jats imperceptibly modified the Sikh system as it was bound to do.⁷⁰ Almost all writers are more or less agreed that one of the fundamental traits in the Jat character has been the instinct of tribal freedom and of tribal kinship.⁷¹

We find that the Jats are a rural and agrarian community consisting largely of peasants and landlords. The role of the Jats was of considerable importance in the evolution of the Khalsa Panth, particularly for the developments which took place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the change or shift from Khatri to Jat leadership in the community. The new features of Sikhism came to represent the dominance of that Jat culture⁷² which Guru Gobind Singh had proclaimed in 1699 as the essentials of Sikhism. Love of freedom and war-like spirit of the Jats could no longer be denied a place within the system.⁷³ At the time of writing the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, its author noted that although the Gurus had been Khatri "they have made the Khatri subservient to the Jats who are the lowest caste among the Vaishya. Thus most of the big *masands* of the Guru are Jats."⁷⁴

According to Irfan Habib the Jats were peasants and the one outstanding problem of the peasants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was that they had to bear a very heavy burden of land revenue and a great degree of oppression of the ruling classes of the Mughal empire. This situation was bound to provoke peasant revolts. Thus the militant development of the Sikh community during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can have one major explanation in this resort to armed violence by the Jat peasantry, when the economic pressure became increasingly intolerable.⁷⁵ The economic pressure on the Jats could be one of the reasons for arraying themselves on the side of Banda Singh but more powerful reason

was the religious persecution suffered by the Sikhs at the hands of the Mughal Government. It led them to take up arms under the leadership of Banda Singh to replace the tyrannical government. Banda Singh was lucky to have such spirited and fearless people, known for their intrepidity and sacrifice, as his followers.

The interested writers of those days and others, who had followed them blindly, have painted Banda Singh and his Sikh comrades in the darkest colours, accusing them of anti-Muslim prejudices. The day-to-day news of the imperial court, preserved in the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, revealed quite a different picture. The news-letter written sometime before the battle of Sirhind fought on May 12, 1710, tells us that the Sikhs, then under the command of Banda Singh, had a deeprooted hatred for Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind, "for the murder of the young sons of Gobind Singh," otherwise Banda Singh had no hatred for Muslims as such. In fact, after the occupation of Sirhind on May 14, 1710, the Sikhs, according to the same report issued such strict orders as not to permit even the killing of a single animal. On the other hand Emperor Bahadur Shah directed Bakhshi-ul-Mummalik Mahabat Khan to issue edicts to the *faujders* "to kill the worshippers of Nanak wherever they were found."⁷⁶ A similar edict was repeated by Farrukh Siyar. The above edict for an indiscriminate and whole-sale massacre of the Sikhs, however, brought no change in Banda Singh's attitude and policy towards the Muslims.

The anti-Sikh and anti-Hindu policy of the Mughal Emperors, contemporaneous with Banda Singh, is quite evident. Emperor Bahadur Shah ordered that the *mutasaddis* should realize *jiziya* from the Nanak-worshippers at double rate.⁷⁷ Emperor Farrukh Siyar ordered that the *kotwal* of Delhi should announce it with the beat of drum that the Hindus should not ride the palanquins and horses of Iraqi and Arab breed.⁷⁸ Farrukh Siyar also issued an order that Sarbrah Khan Kotwal should announce it that none of the Hindus should play or celebrate the *holi* and in that respect the imperial *mohtasib* should also lay sufficient stress.⁷⁹

Despite anti-Sikh and anti-Hindu measures of the Mughal Government Banda Singh did not wish to reduce his struggle to the level of a communal strife. His was a political struggle. He would not, therefore, impose any religious restrictions upon the Muslims as such and they flocked to him in large numbers. The news-letter of April 28, 1711 is self-explanatory, according to which he (Banda Singh) promised and proclaimed, "I do not oppress the Muslims." For any Muslim who approached him he fixed a daily allowance and wages and looked after him. He permitted them to recite *khutba* and *namaz*. As such 5,000 Muslims had gathered around him. They were free to shout their call *bang* and say their prayers — *namaz*.⁸⁰ We have some more news-letters on record which prove beyond doubt that the struggle of Banda Singh was directed only against the tyranny of the local Mughal officials in the Punjab and their high-handedness was resented and opposed not only by the Sikhs and Hindus but also by the Muslims who joined his army in thousands to fight against the Mughal Government.⁸¹ The struggle had been launched against the Mughal Government not because it was a Muslim Government but only because its officials were tyrannical and were hated by the people at large, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike. It was, as such, a popular struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors and not of the Sikhs against the Muslims. It is true that the Mughal Emperor, the provincial governors, *faujdars* and other high officials were Muslims by faith and that the imperial edicts of Bahadur Shah and Farrukh Siyar had been issued against the entire community of the Sikhs. But Banda Singh was able to draw a distinct line between the tyrannical officials and the general mass of the Muslims who were as much the citizens of the country as the Sikhs themselves.

From the close scrutiny of the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, we find that the entire imperial machinery of the Mughal Government was mobilized to liquidate the Sikh movement in the Punjab under Banda Singh. The officers of the Mughal army drafted for operations against the Sikhs received *khillats* (robes of honour) and many other presents before and after the operations. They were provided with

high titles and big *jagirs*. The Emperor bestowed on the successful commanders presents as horses, elephants, weapons, turbans, etc.⁸² In case of their failures their ranks were lowered and their *jagirs* confiscated and sometimes they were totally stripped of their ranks and imprisoned. The government did not take the anti-Sikh operations as an ordinary local or provincial affair. But they fought the war against Banda Singh and his followers at the state level. Commanders and officers of very high rank were deputed by the Emperor to fight against the Sikhs with all the resources at their command. The prominent Mughal generals deputed against the Sikhs included Bahshil-ul-Mulk Mahabat Khan,⁸³ Feroz Khan Bahadur Mewati,⁸⁴ Rustam Dil Khan Bahadur,⁸⁵ Muhammad Amin Khan Bahadur,⁸⁶ Mukhlis Khan Bahadur,⁸⁷ Koleech Muhammad Bahadur,⁸⁸ Hamid Khan Bahadur,⁸⁹ Shamas Khan Bahadur,⁹⁰ Qutab Ali Khan,⁹¹ Ghazi Khan Bahadur,⁹² Zain-ud-Din Ahmad Khan⁹³ and Isa Khan.⁹⁴

The commanders and the senior officers were transferred from place to place keeping in view their usefulness or failure in respect of their activities against the Sikhs. The Emperors and the princes had also to personally proceed to Punjab to conduct operations against the Sikhs. Sometimes the Sikhs did not take any notice of the presence of an Emperor or a prince in their close vicinity. The commanders fighting against the Sikhs often requested the Emperor for more forces and more fighting material. They often found their arrangements and the forces against the Sikhs as inadequate. Their demands for more forces were hurriedly complied with.⁹⁵

There is no denying the fact that it was a war between the unequals. The Mughal Government had a big army at its command. The Mughal army was well-equipped, well-officered and well-trained but the Sikh comrades of Banda Singh were handicapped in many ways. They were an untrained, indisciplined and improperly equipped rabble but their shortcomings were made up by their faith in the genuineness of their cause and their long tradition of undergoing sacrifice and suffering for a good and righteous cause.

Banda Singh and his companions faced cold-blooded murders and big carnage not only after they were captured from Gurdas

Nangal but on many other occasions of their struggle also. According to a newsletters, Feroz Khan Mewati who had gone towards Dabar (Mukhlisipur) and Shirhid to chastise the Nanak-worshippers chopped off 300 heads of the rebel Sikhs and sent the same to the Emperor. The heads were mounted on the spears and displayed.⁹⁶ According to another newsletter Amin Khan Bahadur wrote to the Emperor that he had killed one thousand Sikhs at Sirhind.⁹⁷ Muhammad Amin Khan Bahadur sent 500 heads of the Sikhs to the Emperor who ordered the same to be displayed, and then pyramids to be raised on them.⁹⁸ According to another news-letter Zakariya Khan, son of Abdus Samad Khan, carried nine-hundred heads of Nanak-worshippers to Delhi after the capture of the fortress of Lohgarh. The heads of the rebels were mounted on spears and exhibited in the Chandani Chowk Bazaar. The Emperor witnessed the sight thereof.⁹⁹ There are many such pieces of news available in the *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Maella* informing the chopping off of the heads of the Sikhs and presenting the same to the Emperor. The Sikhs bore all the tortures and extreme hardships stoically and made immense sacrifices to take the struggle to a successful conclusion, always confronting the enemies with utmost courage and undrooping spirits.

Besides being a war against the tyranny of the Mughal Government the Sikh movement under Banda Singh also signified a powerful protest against the beneficiaries of the existing structure of authority. Banda Singh was largely responsible for the liquidation of the *zamindari* system in the Punjab. On his suggestion the tillers of the soil ejected the landlords and the peasants themselves became the masters of land. Large estates were broken into smaller holdings in the hands of Sikh or Hindu peasants. These agrarian changes, to a great extent, ameliorated the lot of the poor peasantry. He ousted the Mughal officers from the various *parganas* of Sirhind division and put his own men in their places.¹⁰⁰ Hindu *qanungos* and *amils* that had been replaced by Muslims under Aurangzeb were dismissed and the jobs of the displaced Hindus were restored to them.¹⁰¹

Whatever its limitations the Sikh movement under Banda Singh was spear-headed by powerful rural elements. The urban elements specially the traders and artisans like the numerous officials and semi-officials in the rural areas benefited, even if not directly, from the existing state structure.

It has been said earlier that at a point of time, in preference to the Khattris, the leadership of the community had been assumed by the Jat Sikhs. The Khattris and the Jat Sikhs had altogether divergent political and economic interests. A large number of Khattris were merchants whose fortunes were closely linked with political stability which could be guaranteed through the maintenance of imperial authority. The Sikh war under Banda Singh began to cause considerable loss to the big merchants, the *shahukars* and the artisans. Lahore, Sialkot, Bajwara, *pargana* of Haibatpur Patti and Batala were among the important centres of trade and industry in the *suba* of Punjab. The merchants, therefore, extended their support to the Mughals. In view of their economic interest sometimes the urban Khattris financed the voluntary efforts of the Sayyids, etc., to fight against the Sikhs. The Khattris thus, got closer to the government and got high positions under Jahandar Shah and Farrukh Siyar. Suba Chand, a mere *munshi* of Zulfiqar Khan, obtained the title of Raja from Jahandar Shah and rose to the office of *Diwan-i-Khalsa*.¹⁰²

The policy of encouraging greater association of the Khattris and the trading community with the state is evident from the careers of Raja Ratan Chand, Raja Mohkam Singh, Raja Bakht Mal and many others who rose to eminent positions in imperial services and were mentioned as *umra* or nobles.

During the short span of Banda Singh's rule and struggle against the Mughal Government there was both a political as well as a social revolution in the Punjab which has been well described by William Irvine that, "in all the *parganas* occupied by the Sikhs the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in the Indian estimation has only to leave home and join the Guru (Banda Singh) when in a short time he would return to his birth place as its ruler with his order of

appointment in hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries the well born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders....Not a soul dared to disobey order and men who had often risked themselves in battle-field, became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate.³⁹¹⁰³ The ruthless execution of Banda Singh in 1716 did, to a certain extent, abate the movement, but only to enable it, later on, to re-equip and to re-assert to finally liquidate the Mughal authority in the Punjab.

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46. According to the local tradition once farmers from the neighbourhood of Sadhaura came to complain to Banda Singh about their suffering at the hands of the landlords. Banda Singh ordered Baj Singh to open fire on them. On being asked he told them that they deserved no better deal. They were thousands in number and

still they allowed themselves to be harassed by a handful of landlords. They acted on the suggestion and did away with the big *zamindars* of Malwa and Jullundur Doab.

47. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I. pp. 98-99.
48. Khafi Khan, Vol. II, pp. 652-655; Mirza Muhammad Harisi, *Ibratnama*, p. 72, MS., PUP.; Ganesh Das Bادهhra, *op.cit.*, p. 118.
49. Karam Singh, *Banda Bahadur*, pp. 77-78.
50. Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *Bansavalinama*, p. 136, MS., KCA.
51. Ghulam Husain, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhkhrin* (English translation), Raymond, Vol. I, p. 82.
52. Kesar Singh Chhibbar, *op.cit.*, p. 136
53. Khushwaqt Rai, p. 96, MS., RS.
54. Ruqaat-i-Amin-ud-Daulah, Letter III (quoted by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 86); Yar Muhammad Qalandar, *Dastur-ul-Insha*, Letter III, MS., Khalsa College Amritsar.
55. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *op.cit.*, pp. 107-108.
56. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, News-letter, April 15, 1711; I have used the English translation of the manuscript by Dr. Bhagat Singh.
57. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1711.
58. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1712.
59. *Ibid.*, February 8, 1711; March 4, 1711.
60. Irvine, *Later Mughals*, Vol. I, p. 98.
61. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, July 1, 1710.
62. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1712.
63. Khafi Khan, Vol. II, p. 662, quoted by Irvine, Vol. I, p. 98.
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65. Khafi-Khan, Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. VII., p. 454.
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72. W. H. McLeod, *The Evolution of the Sikh Community*, p. 10.
73. I. B. Banerjee *op.cit.*, Vol. II, p. 124.
74. *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, English translation by Ganda Singh, *The Panjab Past and Present*, Vol. I, Part-I, April 1967, p. 57.
75. Irfan Habib, 'Presidential Address to the Medieval Section, *Proceedings of the Punjab History Conference* (Patiala, 1972). p. 54
76. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-Mualla*, December 10, 1710.

77. *Ibid.*, May 29, 1711.
78. *Ibid.*, November 9, 1713.
79. *Ibid.*, January 29, 1715.
80. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1711.
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.*, November 23-24, 1710; April 23, 1711.
83. *Ibid.*, September 29, 1710; October 5, 1710.
84. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1710.
85. *Ibid.*, November 18, 1710.
86. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1710; June 7, 1711.
87. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1711.
88. *Ibid.*
89. *Ibid.*, June 29, 1715.
90. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1710.
91. *Ibid.*, March 11, 1711
92. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1710; March 6, 1711.
93. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1714.
94. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1714.
95. *Ibid.*, November 20, 1710.
96. *Ibid.*, October 20, 1710.
97. *Ibid.*, December 7, 1710.
98. *Ibid.*, January 12, 1712; January 18, 1712.
99. *Ibid.*, November 29, 1713.
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102. Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1739* (revised ed.), p. 68.
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Futuhāt namah-i-Samādī :
on
The Nature of Sikh Revolt Under
Banda Singh

Prof. Gurbakhsh Singh*

*Much has been said about Banda, his early life, his battles with the Mughal rulers of the Punjab and his achievements, yet we do not know enough about the nature of the Sikh revolt that he spearheaded against the alien rulers. Was he carrying on a ruthless struggle simply to wreak his vengeance upon the tyrants ? What was the nature of his struggle ? What response his call for struggle against the Mughals evoked amongst the people ? Would it be justifiable to dismiss all the charges of brutality levelled against him by his enemies ? What was his political objective ? What spectacular methods he adopted to demolish the terror of the Mughal sovereignty from the minds of the people ? These are some very pertinent questions. Ghulām Mohyy-ud-Dīn, the author of the **Futuhāt Namah-i-Samādī**, was a prolific writer of history and was not only the contemporary of Banda but had also fought against him in the battle of Gurdas Nangal. There is no doubt in it that he was hostile to the Sikhs*

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but his training as a seasoned historian did not permit him to give to the events a twist to suit his conscience. His contemporary evidence, therefore, provides answers to the questions raised above. The evidence culled from these pages is critically examined. Ed.

Ghulām Mohyy-ud-Dīn's *Futūhāt Nāmāh-i-Samadī* written¹ in 1722-23, is a florid biography of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan² who was appointed Governor of Lahore in Farrukhsiyar's reign (1713-1719). He crushed the Sikhs and arrested their leader Banda in 1715. He was transferred to Multan in 1726 where he died in 1738. *Futūhāt-Nāmāh-i-Samadī* remains unpublished. Of the 174 pages the author has devoted first 131 pages to the narration of the last phase of Banda's struggle against the Mughals. Syad Mohammad Latif who wrote *History of the Panjab* and William Irvine who wrote *Later Mughals* were familiar with the work though they made a sparing use of it because they were not primarily concerned with the life-story of Abdus Samad Khan. The biographers of Banda who are mainly Sikhs have ignored it if not completely dismissed it because of the foul adjectives the author used for the Sikhs. The florid style of the work too posed difficulties for these biographers. The work, however, is of considerable historical interest for understanding the nature of the Sikh revolt under Banda.

A careful analysis of the evidence obtained from these 131 pages³ throws a flood of light on the nature of the Sikh revolt and helps us answer the question whether the Sikh revolt was a local or at the most a sporadic affair, or it was a total war against Mughal Imperialism for the emancipation of motherland from the alien oppressive and tyrannical yoke. It must be understood at the outset that the author was hostile to the Sikhs. He had no sympathy for their cause. He poured bitter invectives on them. He never missed an opportunity to ridicule them with impunity if his training as a disciplined historian did not stand in his way; and yet if the overall picture of the Sikh character and their political and social ideologies that emerge from his narrative is favourable to the Sikhs, they are not to be blamed for it. It could not be attributed to the author's bias

for the Sikhs which he had none. This factor, on the other hand, lends greater credibility to the author's comments on the events narrated by him.

The Sikh uprising which originally initiated as a war of revenge against Wazir Khan's ill-treatment of their Tenth Master, soon engulfed the whole of the Punjab and assumed the dangerous form of a total war for liberation from the Mughal rule. The Sikh ire once roused to a pitch against the inequitable and tyrannical treatment of the Mughals, knew no abating till the tyrants had been completely wiped out making room for the oppressed to take the government of the land in their own hands. His evidence on the topic is very clear and incontrovertible.

That it was not a localised affair but a wide-spread movement, is clear from two things. Firstly, people all over the hills and the plains had risen in revolt.⁴ Secondly the ramifications of the uprising had reached as far as Iran, Turan, Qandhar, Multan and the neighbouring climes and countries.⁵ Hindus from these regions, converged on the Punjab to join hands with Banda to expel the Mughals from the land.⁶ Such a profuse, spontaneous and voluntary response to Banda's call for a struggle for emancipation highlights the seriousness of the situation which the Mughals had to face in the Punjab.

Regarding the ultimate objective of the Sikhs, the author leaves no doubt about it that the Sikhs, though originally provoked into action by the tyranny of Wazir Khan⁷, they took no time to make an open declaration of their design to replace the Mughals as a sovereign power in the Punjab. Since Wazir Khan's headquarters were at Sirhind, the Sikh struggle for giving their tormentors a taste of their sword also commenced from the same place. Once they had sacked Sirhind and put Wazir Khan to death, or even dismembered his dead body and allowed the pieces to hang on the main gateway of Sirhind⁸ their thirst for revenge should have been satiated but that was not so. They proceeded against the Mughal garrisons⁹ in his territory because these were, according to them, the citadels of oppression and imperial strongholds. They removed the garrisons from the

thanas and put them in charge of their own men.¹⁰ Once Wazir Khan's territory was in their hands, they began to look into the not too distant future. The prospects were bright.

Their initial success further sharpened their teeth and it whetted their appetite for a display of more adventurous feats. Like a flood of calamities they now issued forth from all parts of the country. They made the whole country an abode of disturbances.¹¹ They tore to pieces all such obstacles as impeded the realisation of their ultimate objective. They soon developed the capacity to cross all hurdles, however strong and impenetrable they might have appeared.¹²

Their most spectacular achievement lay in their most glamorous success in dispelling the fear of Mughal sovereignty which the Mughals had built during the last two hundred years of their rule in India. The aura of grandeur built up round the Mughal sovereignty represented the *sad-i-Sikandri*¹³ i.e. the impenetrable Chinese Wall. *Ro'b-i-Sultāni* emanated from this *Sad-i-Sikandari*.¹⁴ The entire strength of the Mughal Imperialism lay in this *Ro'b-i-Sultāni* which the Sikhs now made a clean sweep of in the land. The author therefore very pertinently remarked that "*ān sad-i-Sikandri ke ro'b-i-Sultāni ibārat azost, rufteh, jai shorish deede*",¹⁵ i.e. they (the Sikhs) made a clean sweep of the aura round the Mughal sovereignty and demolished its majesty altogether. The terror of the Mughal sovereignty had been removed so completely that, unmindful of the Mughal might in the Punjab, the Hindus started pouring into the Punjab in large numbers in disguise or even openly by the beat of the drum.¹⁶ The beat of the drum in the regions from where they had converged on the Punjab represented the challenge of the Hindus who had embraced Sikhism. They had created an overall atmosphere of freedom from fear. They showed scant regard to the Mughal officials and thronged into the Punjab to join the Sikh leader.¹⁷

Now with *thānās* under their control and the Mughal garrisons expelled and relaxed by Sikh garrisons and officials, and the terror of the Mughal sovereignty demolished completely, the Sikhs proceeded to make a more spectacular and more impressive move to declare the emergence of an independent sovereign state in the

Punjab. They decided to take a somewhat sophisticated and a practical move to put a seal on their eastern boundary by declaring the termination of the Mughal sovereignty over the country under their possession. Ghulām Mohyy-ud-Din's evidence on this point is very unique. No other writer has made a mention of what he has stated; but there is no reasons to disbelieve what he has mentioned. The Sikhs, according to the author, chose the plain of Thanesar to be the scene of their next political rather than military action.

They erected a huge giant-sized wooden¹⁸ tower on the other side of the plain of Thanesar touching the western boundary of the Delhi Empire. The author has, no doubt, ridiculed¹⁹ their ambitious attempts at establishing their sovereignty but he has not been slow to perceive the significance of the move. The practice of setting up a wooden-tower was known to the Indian warriors. They called it in Hindi a *khambā*.²⁰ The obvious implication of setting up such a *khambā* was the assertion of their undisputed right of ownership to the place where the *khambā* was erected. In the more unsophisticated practices in the rural Punjab, this practice of setting up a *khambā* to demarcate the respective spheres of territorial rights to a piece of land still prevails and has a strong local sanction. Besides, in Persian history also, as the author says, the practice of setting up a war-tower existed. It was known as *Satūn-i-Jang*.²¹ It was set up by reputed warriors who resembled Rustam and Asfandayar in courage and fearlessness. The author then further clarifies their stand and says:

'ramz-i-dāwā ānke agar farmānrwāi Hindūstān ba ān hama lashkar-i-zafar tarāz w janūd-i-nusrat burg w saz 'inan-ī-tawajjah ba in maidān ma'tuf sazaḍ bain-ul tarfain īn milighūbār tamsīl ilamat-i-harkat w istaqāmat u dalīl tawānad būd.'²²

"The implication of their claim (for setting up a *khambā*) was that if the Emperor of Hindustan with all his victorious army and conquering hordes, chose to direct his attention to this part of the land, this tower, should, like a cloud of dust, serve to remind him that he had to cry a halt to his march and that is (territorial) jurisdiction

ended there.” The above passage from a writer, who was obviously hostile to the Sikhs, leaves no doubt in the minds of the critics that the Sikhs had loftier designs in their minds and that they would not be content unless they had become supreme in their own part of the land. They knew that Thanesar had a strategic and political importance. All the decisive battles for mastery over India were fought there. This plain was the scene of the great Mahabharata war. It was on the main road from Delhi to the Punjab. A giant-sized wooden-tower, declaring the termination of the Mughal sovereignty over the Punjab, was a step of great daring and momentous political consequences. It was also indicative of the Sikhs designs to challenge the Mughal Emperor for their right over the Punjab. It was for the first time in the history of the Punjab of the last seven hundred years after disappearance of the great Hindushahis that the Punjab had successfully met the challenge of the alien rulers. Greatness of the achievement could not be underrated on account of the temporary set-back the movement received, as within the next three decades Punjab again passed under the control of the Sikhs though they had to wade through a sea of blood.

The author's comments on the efforts of the Sikhs at giving the society a superior social system infused with loftier ethical and moral values are no less valuable. He has confirmed the truth of what Banda had in one of his *hukumnāmā*²³ claimed for himself. Banda looked upon the Sikhs as the creators of the emancipated Punjab. He also considered them as the custodians of its independence.²⁴ But the privileges obtained through political ascendancy were not to be vitiated by moral deterioration. Banda had shown himself in that *hukumnāmā* as a chief protagonist of supreme moral values in the conduct of social life. He had issued severe injunctions to the Sikhs for stricter observance of the *rehat-maryādā* and for complete elimination of such social vices as adultery, stealing, lying, using tobacco²⁵ etc. and to sacrifice everything, asking for nothing in return but the blessings of the Guru. Ghulam Mohyy-ud-Din's evidence supports the justification of Banda's proud boast.

The author's pen-picture of a Sikh is very clear. He writes :

"Every Sikh resembles a bear on account of excessive hair on their heads and faces. Neither their heads nor faces have ever experienced the touch of a razor. Their whole bodies are concealed behind their beards. When they spread their hair behind their backs, they look like a tail. Other heretics put *janeu* round their necks; they alone put iron chains round the necks (to use them as sword-belts). They never remove their hair from their nostrils and their arm-pits."²⁶

The Sikh's love for their *rehat-maryādā* which Banda insisted upon could never be described better than this statement of an hostile writer.

The author also commends the moral values professed by the Sikhs though he admits their superiority with a touch of irony. Banda had strictly enjoined upon his followers to ban adultery completely from their rank and file. The author says, "they are dirty wretched, unclean and verily devils incarnate, a calamity on earth descending from the heavens, but they never take a woman except for a mother."²⁷ The author, in whose ranks sexual laxity was the prevalent norm, was surprised at the rigid abstinence of the Sikhs from adultery. He perhaps expresses a surprise at such a conduct which appeared abnormal to him. He has, therefore, said that they never took a woman except for a mother. In fact the Sikhs had adopted a moral code where adultery was a heinous crime. Since the Sikhs, according to Banda, were to perpetuate the *Satyug* i.e. the golden millenium, they were to present themselves as embodiments of moral virtues. Social inequalities born out of caste prejudices were to be ruthlessly annihilated. Banda had taken various steps in promoting social equality. Not only the low-caste Hindus from abroad had joined his ranks in large numbers, but the low-caste people of the Punjab had also volunteered to swell his ranks. These low-caste Hindus were termed *khas-khāshāk-i-hanūd-i-jahanmī-wajūd* ²⁸ i.e. the dregs of the society of the hellish Hindus. Yet these very people after joining the fold of the *Nānak parastān* had assumed such formidable strength that the author considered them *āfat-i-āsmānī* i.e. calamity

from the heavens. When the Mughals failed to give them a fight, the author justified their failure on the grounds that *tāqat-i-insānī ba āfat-i-āsmānī kujā ham panjā shawad* i.e. it was not within the power of a human being to seek confrontation with calamity from the heavens.²⁹

The Sikh revolt had however failed to attract the urbanite Hindus and others who belonged to the commercial classes and had vested interests in the preservation of the *status quo*. The Hindus of Lahore liberally financed the voluntary efforts of the Sayyads of Lahore to fight against the Sikhs. They joined hands with the Muslims to accord befitting welcome to such Mughal forces as could boast of the smallest success against the Sikhs. They showered pockets full of coins on the soldiers as a mark of the recognition of their services and sacrifices. They freely participated in the jubilations of the Muslims on such occasions. For such Hindus the author has a word of appreciation. Since they were loyal to the government of the day, they were called *hanūdān-i-ata'at ahrīn* i.e. loyal and faithful Hindus.³⁰ But it appears that the number of such Hindus was not very large, as they could do nothing to help effectively the Mughals against the ever-increasing tempo of the Sikhs uprising. The feelings of brotherhood and equality that the assemblage of the multi-caste groups from the Hindu society generated in Banda Singh's army were further reinvigorated by the compulsory practice of calling all the soldiers of revolution as Guru's *sahibzadas* i.e. sons.³¹ All distinctions between man and man were thus removed through this practical device.

Lastly, one wonders whether it would not be justifiable to reject on the basis of this evidence all the charges of brutality and tyranny levelled against Banda Singh by those who did not relish this revolutionary upsurge in the Punjab. At least Ghulam Mohyy-ud-Dīn's evidence would absolve Banda of this charge. Ghulām Mohyy-ud-Dīn has, no doubt, called Banda Singh a tyrant, a persecutor of the followers of Islam, a devil whose activities uprooted the Muslim families from their ancestral homes and forced them to migrate to distant places for security of life but it is strange that excepting one

ambiguous reference to an act of cruelty the author has nowhere given any incident accusing Banda of any tyrannical conduct. In the above reference the author accused the Sikhs of throwing Muslim children into the air and cutting them into two with their swords as soon as they fell on the ground.³² This was a condemnable act of cruelty, but the author throws light on the conduct of the Muslim soldiery also who committed worst acts of cruelty but whose acts were condoned by the author because he had perhaps religious affinities with them ! He says that Muslim soldiers are forbidden to raise their swords against a fallen foe, hence they lifted the wounded Sikhs on the pointed tips of their spears and kept them suspended in the air in that state, till they breathed their last.³³ From this, it can be concluded safely that during the battle, if there were acts of cruelties, they were committed by both the sides. Had Banda ordered wholesale slaughter of the Muslim population perhaps he would not have been able to persuade 5,000 Muslim soldiers to join hands with him against the Mughals. However, the author's silence on this important point confirms our doubts about the charges of brutality levelled against the Sikh leader.³⁴

The entire evidence thus called from this source throws a valuable light on the nature and purpose of the Sikh revolt under Banda.

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2. C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature*, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 664.
3. *Futūhāt Nāmāh-i-Samādī*, pp. 1-131.
- 4, 5, 6. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 15 The author writes about the origin of the Sikh uprising :
"sar-i-dāwā az garībā-i-kin-i-Wazīr Khā Ke dar muqaddmā-i-istisāl-i-maqhūr-i-awwalīn az o sinā-rīsh būdand, bar āwurdā, dast-i-tārāj bar aksar-i-ān balād bar mī kashand."
tr. "They raised their heads to wreak their vengeance from Wazir Khan who

had uprooted their previous master (Guru Gobind Singh) as they had been nursing against Wazir Khan a wound in their hearts."

8. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 15. The author specifically says :

"*w aḥwāj-i-Wazīr Khān rā az thānājāt-i-jā- bajā ba rdāshdā rīsha-i- tasur rūfāt kawālī-e- balā-i-Sīhrind mī darāzand.*"

tr. "They expelled Wazir Khan's garrisons from the *thanas* all over the country and brought the entire country up to the cities of Sirhind under their possession."

10-22. *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18, 20 and 43.

23-25. *Hukmnāmās*. ed. Ganda Singh, pp. 195-196.

26-30. *Fütühāt Nāmāh-i-Samadī*, pp. 20-22., 21, 28, 90 and 91.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 23. The writer says :

"*Yakī rā b targhīb-i-dīgrān pīsar-i-khāndā-i-gūrū-i-maḥhūr guftā b laqab-i-shāhzādgi mashhūr kardāh.*"

tr. Everyone would address the other as the adopted son of the oppressed Guru (Guru Gobind Singh) and would publicise themselves with the title of *sāhibzādā*."

32-33. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

34. It is significant to observe that another contemporary work *Asrār-i-Samadī* also does not refer to any particular instance of Banda's brutality.

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Asrar-i-Samadi : An Analysis

Prof. Gurbakhsh Singh*

The author has in this paper presented an analysis of Asrar-i-Samadi, a contemporary work on the life and times of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan, who had assumed the governorship of Lahore in 1713 at a highly critical period of Mughal rule in India. The death of Aurangzeb in 1708 had plunged the whole of the Mughal empire into a whelter of chaos but Punjab and Kashmir suffered worse. The author of the Asrar-i-Samadi, was a court official of the last phase of Banda Bahadur's struggle against Mughal imperialism, and of the Nawab's persistent efforts to restore peace and order throughout the province not only of Lahore but also of Kashmir and Multan and also on the borders of Kabul, offers itself as a highly useful source of trustworthy information on this period of great political turmoil for the Mughals. —Ed.

Asrar-i-Samadi published by the Research Institute of Pakistan, Lahore in 1965, is a literary work of great historical importance highlighting into prominence the military exploits of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan, who as Governor of Lahore, Kashmir and Multan presided over the destiny of this militarily very sensitive region in northern India from 1713 to 1737. The late Professor Muhammad Shuja-ud-Din, Head of the Department of History, Dayal Singh

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College, Lahore, who unearthed its only two extant manuscripts in Hafiz Mahmud Shirani's Collection of Manuscripts lying in the Punjab University library, Lahore,¹ and then edited it; and Dr Muhammad Bashir Hussain, who revised the same and got it published, have certainly rendered signal service to the students of the history of the Punjab in presenting to them this indispensable work of great merit on the life and the times of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan. Its author was not only a contemporary of the Nawab, but was also his trusted and honoured *munshi* and enjoyed his patronage² extensively. Along with the *BadaiWaqai* of Munshi Anand Ram Mukhlis, another contemporary writer of considerable repute, and the *Fatuhat Namah-i-Samadi* by Ghulam Mohyud Din, the *Asrar-i-Samadi* excites a researcher's deep interest into the study of the history of that period of the Punjab, some aspects of which remain as yet unexplored.

The author has nowhere mentioned his name in his work, and though it is no indication of a writer's greatness if he chooses to omit his name in his work, yet it is true that many great writers of that period preferred not to make a mention of their names in their works. They felt shy of indicating their names in their books. Munshi Sujjan Rai Bhandari flourished hardly a few years earlier. He wrote his famous work *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh* in 1697 but the book never reveals his name. However, the author of the *Asrar-i-Samadi* has made copious references in the book to his literary talents, his aspirations and to the details of his personal life. In the preface to his book written in a highly florid, ornate, verbose and turgid style, in praise of God Almighty, he describes himself as a native of Kalanaure, a place which had the proud distinction of being the early seat of Akbar's Government. He calls his work *Ahrar-o-Ahsrar-Samadi* which when converted into figures, gives us the date of its composition as 1141³ A.H. i.e. A.D. 1728, a decade before the death of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan. In the same preface he throws light on the motives which inspired him to undertake this work. He has made a specific reference to his superior skill in poetry which had

actually excited the jealousy of his contemporaries. *Asrar-i-Samadi* is however, a work of Persian prose. There were several factors which persuaded the author to venture into the domain of prose. By demonstrating his talents and skill in prose writing, he sought constructively to silence his jealous critics who found fault with him for the lack of any literary work of his in Persian prose. Secondly, he was convinced that like poetry, a good prose-work could also perpetuate the memories of a scholar⁵ for all time to come. Thirdly, he had for years been the recipient of the Nawab's extensive favours, and had passed his life in peace and plenty and since he had also been a witness to several important political and other events, and was still continuing to enjoy the same facilities uninterruptedly,⁶ he was in a position to describe those events in prose in a trustworthy manner and, thereby, he could discharge his debt of gratitude to his benefactor, the Nawab. He took up this task because he considered himself most eminently fitted for it. Unluckily however, excepting these stray hints regarding his personal life, we do not come across anything more of much consequence about his life.

The identification of his name presents us with a somewhat ticklish problem. Professor Muhammad Shuja-ud-Din has made some meaningful conjectures. Before discussing the available data about the author's name, he appears to have taken it for granted that the author was a Hindu. What justification he had to arrive at this conclusion ? He has not thrown any light on it. But we get some references, though indirect, from his writing. He was in the service of the Mughal provincial governor yet he showed no hesitance in acknowledging with surprise the superhuman feats of courage and valour displayed by the starving and the helpless Sikhs in the most trying and difficult situation.⁷ Similarly, he condemned with unparalleled vehemence the torture and the humiliation to which the helpless subjects of the Doab⁸ (who were naturally Hindus or Sikhs) were subjected by their Afghan *faujdar*s Bayazid Khan and his nephew Shams Khan. Moreover, we have an external indirect evidence also to support the view. Most of the *munshis* in the Mughal

employment were Hindus. For example, Jaswant Rai, Inderjit, Jot Prakash, Kirpa Ram Multani and Anand Ram Mukhlis were the most prominent *munshis* of this period, and they were all Hindus. Hence it sounds quite reasonable to support Professor Muhammad Shuja-ud-Din's view in accepting the author as a Hindu.

Professor Shuja-ud-Din, then by a process of analytical elimination, seeks to establish the author's name. Munshi Jaswant Rai could not have written his work because, though he was a contemporary of the Nawab, he was attached to the far off court of the Nawab of Karnatak. It is unimaginable to think that he could have ventured to pay a visit to the Punjab to collect material for his work. Munshi Inderjit described himself as a resident of Nakodar.⁹ This dismisses his claim also to its authorship. Munshi Kirpa Ram Multani was too young at the time when the author of the *Asrar-i-Samadi* was enjoying the Nawab's patronage at his court. At that age he could not have been assigned such important post at the Nawab's court. Anand Ram Mukhlis's claims too can similarly be dismissed outright. Munshi Jot Prakash is thus the only probable person who could justifiably be accredited with the authorship of this celebrated work. He was a poet of no mean achievement. The *Dastur-i-Ishak*, an epic poem on the love story of the Punjab heroes Sassi and Punnu, written in 1723, is ascribed to him. His absolute familiarity with the Punjabi love-story leaves no doubt in our minds about his being a Punjabi. Though he too did not write his name in the book, yet its Lahore publishers ascribed its authorship to Jot Prakash and made a clear mention of that on the title page.¹⁰

Absence of the writer's name in the book, as already discussed, is not a sufficient reason to reject his claim to its authorship. Here too perhaps Professor Shuja-ud-Din's conjecture verges on the borders of near correctness. The author wrote his epic-poem *Dastur-i-Ishak*, in 1723, and five years after chose to display his talents in the field of prose. It would be an unjustifiable attempt to allow too much of scepticism to stand in our way of agreeing with the view held by the learned Professor.

Its Historical Importance

As a source book, *Asrār-i-Samadi* merits considerable attention for a deeper study of the history of the Punjab during the governorship of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan, but before we make an objective study and analysis of the work, it is essential to examine the possible shortcomings the book might have possessed. It is pertinent to note in this connection that the author was essentially a poet and that history was not his primary discipline. Moreover, he was more anxious to demonstrate his skill in writing prose than in providing historical thesis to his readers. He chose the historical events to be the subject of his writing simply because he was more familiar with the subject-matter. Moreover, he was more interested in discharging his debt of gratitude to his benefactor and patron, the Nawab. To perpetuate his memory as a writer was a selfish motive and this could easily be adduced as a sufficient reason to dismiss the work's historical value. There is ample amount of truth in all what has been said above. However, despite all this, the work on no account suffers as a reliable source of contemporary history. The author was indebted to the Nawab and was still enjoying his patronage, yet we don't find even the smallest trace of flattery, let alone fulsome eulogy. On the other hand, by condemning the atrocities committed by the Afghan *faujdars*, he shows a rare amount of courage. This could have displeased his patron and certainly angered the Mughals as well as the Muslims. He accepted the risk but did not attempt to put a veil on the most nefarious deeds of the erring Mughal *faujdars*. This display of unusual courage lends more credence to his narration which remains completely substantiated by other contemporary works. His personal familiarity with most of the events and also the facility to enquire from those who actually participated in the events, were additional advantages he possessed. Luckily, his lack of historical discipline is more than compensated by his scrupulous adherence to the narration of only bare facts and in refusing to give any twist to the facts while interpreting them. His fondness for poetry, instead of proving a source of disadvantage is,

on the other hand, a source of strength for determining the veracity of facts. A closer study reveals that the couplets copiously quoted in the work, are more helpful in understanding his analysis of the character and the situation. He makes a very forceful analysis of the situation in those couplets which were, excepting two each of Shaikh Saadi and *Masnavi Ghanimat*, his own, because he is always original. All these factors emphasize the importance and the usefulness of the book.

The first incident described in the order of narration, chronology as well as importance, was Banda's revolt. Cursorily viewed, the readers would not find anything new which is not mentioned by other writers and which have by now been not known to the students of history. According to the author, Banda was a wretched and accursed tyrant. He called himself Banda i.e. a slave of the Lord but he actually destroyed the abodes of the Lord's worship. He raised such a serious rebellion in the state that the news spread to as far off places as Rome and Sham (Syria)¹¹. He wrought such devastation in the country that even a serpent in the innermost recesses of the earth writhed in pain¹². Such was the terror of his name, that not even a single Mughal commander ventured forward to face this man's sword.¹³ He brought resurrection¹⁴ to the land. He inflicted crushing defeat on the most formidable Afghan *faujdar*s Bayazid Khan and his nephew Shams Khan. The Sikhs were, however, ultimately defeated when they were besieged in the fortress of Gurdaspur and the Nawab, through his superior strategy and military tactics reduced them to such straits which left them no alternative but to surrender to the Nawab's forces. But of the Nawab's unrelenting and mounting pressure, the Sikhs had very nearly succeeded in knocking out the bottom of the purposeless structure of the Mughal empire. The credit for maintaining intact the fabric of the Mughal administration, goes thus, invariably to this spirited and energetic Nawab, who slowly but gradually, wore down the opposition of the Sikhs and forced them to yield. Now all these are well-known facts. Besides, the author has failed to provide us

with any information about the genesis of the Sikhs's opposition to the Mughal Government in the State. He has not uttered a single word on Emperor Aurangzeb's policy of religious persecution. He has completely ignored Wazir Khan, the *faujdar* of Sirhind's atrocious conduct in bricking alive the two innocent sons and putting the Guru's aged mother to death. His comments on these important events which formed the basis of steeling the resolve of the Sikhs to emancipate themselves from the oppressive foreign yoke, would have been very useful for understanding the whole mood of the Mughal officials and the reaction it evoked among the Sikhs. However, since it did not fit in the scheme that he had chalked out for writing this book, it is futile to reproach him for not doing something which he had no mind to do at all. He was concerned with the military exploits of his patron and he has done more than justice to his topic. In addition to this, his account of Banda is significant for many other things. It is pertinent to point out that the author has omitted the earlier phase of Banda's struggle and has confined himself only to its last phase. He calls the Sikhs *Nanak Mushrabs*.¹⁵ They, according to him, were very peace-loving, very humble and harmless people. They only fell under the spell of Banda. The Sikhs had virtually ceased to make themselves felt immediately before Banda i.e. after the death of the Tenth Master. It was Banda who enlivened them to their original importance. However, he has not described the spell.

This account is significant from another point of view also. The historians have generally neglected the futile and the most disastrous attempts made by the Afghan brothers, Bayazid Khan, the *faujdar* of Jammu and his nephew Shams Khan, the *faujdar* of the Doab. The author explains how these ferocious Afghans set out of their respective charges and how they suffered heavily at the hands of the starving Sikhs at the battle of Thatian. The Afghans were crushed and they lost their both the leaders in the struggle.¹⁶ The penetrating insight which the author's comments on the causes of their defeat give us into the character of the impact the Sikh movement had made on the People of the Doab and the reaction it

evoked in the Mughal administration, is very fresh and revealing. After having received orders to march against Banda's forces, these Afghans did not proceed immediately to accomplish the urgent task first. They fell upon their own helpless subjects in the Jullundur Doab and played havoc with the life, property and honour of their own *riyaya*. Rahon and several other surrounding towns were devastated, pillaged and destroyed.¹⁷ The author has again written nothing to describe the causes of such a rash conduct of the rulers, but this is more than evident that the Sikhs had relations in the region and the entire populace had become secret sympathisers of the Sikh movement, which aimed at establishing golden Millinneum. It is obvious that the people of the Doab suffered for their softness for the Sikhs. However, the rashness of the Afghans was also proverbial. It was their utter foolishness that they did not think twice before estranging the vast majority of their own subjects in those difficult times. Here the author offers philosophically plausible answer to the question as to why the Afghans were defeated inspite of their superiority in number and equipment. He puts himself a question. How can a tyrant win a war ? He writes :

“Yes, wherever a tyrant embarks upon a war, he leaves behind only such people who have been rendered pale with fear”. To another question as to how can a tyrant defeat his enemy, he writes “that excepting this that he risks his own neck, he achieves nothing else. Tell him that he will only bite the back of his own hands in shame and grief, because *Deg* and *Teg* were born twins since eternity and they (could not be seperated). Victory shall never be in store for a tyrant, because victory is the quintessence of such valour as is displayed with the sword of magnanimity and generosity.” The author clearly refers to the tyranneous conduct of the Afghans which had resulted in the forfeiture of their right to victory. There were various other causes for the success of Sikhs in that battle. It was their reckless bravery. The unparalleled feats of valour displayed by the hungry, tired, and extremely exhausted Sikhs, whose supplies had run out completely and who were fighting with sore feet, elicited

genuine praise from him and he writes that in such straits they left no valour undemonstrated and no feats of courage and audacity unpractised. He writes :

“Lion-like they sprang upon the backs of the elephants, and flung on the ground those who were seated in the *Haudas* (seats on the back of the elephants).

Like leopards (*chitahs*) they would reach such places where even the fastest horse would be reluctant to proceed.¹⁸

Apart from their personal bravery, the Sikhs under Banda had, according to the author, another claim to victory and that was the most important claim. It was Banda's slogan of *Deg* and *Teg* which he had given to the suffering people of the Punjab :

Deg Teg Fateh Nusrat-i-Bedrang

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh

Banda had advocated the victory of *Deg* and *Teg* over oppression and tyranny. He had advocated in his *Hukamnamah* the perpetuation of the Golden Millinnum he established with *Deg* and *Teg*. It is crystal clear that the author was deeply influenced by the truthfulness of the right to claim victory for one who wields only the sword of magnanimity and generosity. Though he has condemned in no less categorical terms the excesses committed by Banda, yet he has not been able to deny the truth of the ideal which Banda set before himself and before the entire people of the Punjab, that if victory was to be won, it was to be won only by wielding the sword of generosity. This indirect but very clear reference to the ideal of the *Deg* and the *Teg* preached by Banda shows the universal popularity, Banda and his ideals had achieved in the Punjab. This reference gives us a clue to another very significant development, i.e. a secret respect for the ideal of *Deg* and *Teg* that had penetrated even the ranks of the Mughal bureaucracy, otherwise such an important Mughal official could not have made a specific note of it. Of course it must not be forgotten that this Mughal bureaucrat was perhaps a Hindu.

The author's pertinent reference to the pathetic plight of the Sikhs inside the fortress of Gurdaspur further supports Banda's idealistic approach in the politics of settlement. They were overtaken by a calamity which had put such fetters on their feet that because of starvation they had been reduced to the position of the crescent moon (one day's curved moon). Hunger had obsessed them with alone thought only and that was the thought of bread and bread alone and nothing else. On sighting the bread-like round cake of the sun they would open their mouths expecting every time the cake-like sun fall into their mouths. Such was the state of their starvation that they ate up all the leaves and the fruits of the trees. They would devour the dust in mouthfuls and relish it more than they could have relished even sugar. Their wells too had dried up, and they, therefore, rushed out of their shelters into the open so that some one might take pity on them and quench their thirst by thrusting daggers into their palates. if they lost at the end, they lost because of this thirst which got them entrapped into the hands of their opponents.²⁰

All this contemporaneous evidence by one who had ample opportunities in the Nawab's court either to see the events himself or to have an access to the trustworthy people and reliable accounts, is from historical point of view very useful and cannot be dismissed light heartedly.

However, Banda's revolt was the first to challenge the Mughal might in the Punjab, it was not the last. Even when the Sikhs had convulsed the Mughal empire, and there was not even a single nobleman in the whole of the country who could have accepted their challenge, and no one dared risk life in the deadly struggle with the ferocious Sikhs, the prominent Muslim chieftains failed miserably to realised the gravity of the situation. Otherwise why should have the Kharals, the Bhattis and the Dogars tried to further weaken the already considerably weakned empire of their own by creating trouble for the Government. The author tells us that the Nawab himself went to suppress the Kharals, Bhattis and the Dogars. They were petty chiefs and yet their contumacy was so sure of undermining

the prestige of the empire that the Nawab had personally to take the field against them.

Isa Khan Munj and his father Daulat Khan Munj of Sirhind posed another threat to the peace and prosperity of the whole State. Isa Khan was an ordinary Zamindar of Sirhind. Originally he was a robber but had gathered round himself a band of the desperadoes with whose help he brought the entire territory from the Tehara on the Sutlej to the fort of Deresa on the Beas. Gradually he began to take part in political activities also. The time was very ripe for the purpose. The death of Aurangzeb had plunged the whole of the country into the throes of the civil wars. In the battle of Jauju Isa Khan volunteered to side with prince Muazzam and when the civil war ended in favour of the above prince, the grateful prince soon awarded him with a *Mansab*. And when Jahandar Shah ascended the throne, the new emperor conferred upon him a rank of 5000 and also entrusted him with the *Faujdari* of Thatta and the Lakhi jungle. He soon constructed a fort at Deresa. But all this vastly accumulated wealth, possession of a powerful fort and the increasing amount of royal favours turned his head and in 1718 he raised a rebellion against Nawab Abdus Samad Khan also. The *Asrar-i-Samadi* has thrown good deal of light on the treasonous conduct of this Isa Khan who, according to the author, had ignored all the royal favours bestowed²¹ upon him from time to time and had sought to eliminate his own benefactor.

The Nawab proceeded very cautiously against this Muslim rebel. The author of the *Asrar-i-Samadi* has not said so, but it is more than clear that at first the Nawab wanted to bring him round to his senses by peaceful means. The Nawab preferred conciliation to conflict and war but Isa Khan spurned all his overtures for peace. Perhaps the religious identity with the rebel suggested to the Nawab a milder course. The Nawab started fighting only when the rebel persisted in his contumacy and in his treasonable conduct. In the fight it was but natural that whosoever possessed the superior military power, was sure to carry the day. Nawab possessed it and therefore

he won. Isa Khan and his father Daulat Khan Munj both died fighting on the battlefield.

While commenting on this revolt, the author writes that a zamindar should have been contented with his own small cottage because ordinary grass is so substitute for rose and the poppy flowers. Isa Khan suffered because he lost his head in moments of affluence and pride, and pride is a curse which brings about the ruin of the person who allows it to build a nest in his head. Pride is a curse which must necessarily be shaken off. The author's account of Isa Khan is, however, very sketchy.

Isa Khan's suppression brought peace to Sirhind, but the Nawab still had many head-aches to cope with. This time the Afghans of Qasur hatched plans to challenge the might of the Lahore Governor. Under the leadership of Husain Khan Afghan, the Afghans of Qasur held aloft the banner of revolt.²² The author ascribes this revolt to various reasons. The Afghans were, according to the author, utterly devoid of any wisdom. He considers foolishness as the prominent characteristic of the Afghan clan. They were so conceited and so puffed up with pride that they would not show any regard for anyone else. Their haughtiness would not permit them to submit to the royal commands. Indifferent to the consequences of their foolish actions, they began to appropriate to themselves all the *Jagirs* in the neighbouring region, refusing to pay even a single penny to the royal exchequer. They would not make any payment to the royal servants. By such indiscreet intrepidations, they disturbed the mental peace of the common people. At first the Nawab, out of magnanimity and greatness, connived at their excesses, but his angelic qualities of tolerance and forgiveness served on the other hand to whip up their pride. They failed to appreciate correctly the sweetness of this blessing and were goaded by their excesses, but his angelic qualities of tolerance and forgiveness served on the other hand to whip up their pride. They failed to appreciate correctly the sweetness of this blessing and were goaded by their senseless pride to raise a standard of revolt. They now carried their depredations to the neighbourhood

of the capital city of Lahore. It whetted their rapacity to such an extent that they began to aspire for the appropriation of the revenue of the capital²⁴ also. Their atrocities on the people of Lahore sent a thrill of horror among the residents of Lahore. The author expresses surprise at the irony of the fact that, though the Afghan leader was named Husain (the name of Prophet Muhammad's grandson), yet he had set before himself the path of Yazid²⁵, the persecutor of the great prince, Husain. Their depredations now could not be ignored, rather they served as a stimuli to stir the otherwise indifferent Nawab into action and he issued forth from the city to chastise the impudent rebels. The Afghans too came out of the city of Qasur to fight against the Mughal forces. A fierce battle ensued in which the Afghans made a remarkable display of their reckless audacity and pluck. However, they soon found themselves overwhelmed by heavy odds arrayed against them. When Husain Khan was convinced that he had lost the battle, he plunged headlong into the battlefield and rushed himself into the thick of the battle. He knew that his enemy would not allow him to enjoy even the status of an ordinary foot-soldier²⁷ in a place where he had been enjoying the undisputed status of a virtual ruler. Filled with the courage of desperation, he soon fell upon the elephant on which the Nawab was riding. He made such a mighty dash on the Nawab, that even the most lion-hearted warrior would have staggered under its blows. But then God came to the rescue of the Nawab and the Nawab overpowered the Afghans and Husain was pierced to death in the skirmish round the Nawab's elephant.²⁸

It must be mentioned here that the author's explanation of the reasons for this widespread disaffection in the state does not represent the whole truth. He was concerned only with depicting his hero, the Nawab, as the mighty Rustam who did not fail to crush all the rebels wherever they dared raise their heads. Any other mature historian could have easily perceived the deeper causes involved in the whole process of revolts and rebellions in the state. Credit, of course, must be given to him that his work helps us in understanding those causes clearly.

Now a situation had arisen in the state where the Sikhs had been crushed, though temporarily; the Munjs of Sirhind had been subdued and the Afghans of Qasur had been successfully suppressed, but trouble was brewing in another quarter. Kashmir was the trouble-spot now. As is his wont, the author has again contented himself with a minor explanation of the causes that convulsed the whole state. This time Sharaf-ud-Din was the source of trouble. According to the author, Sharaf-ud-Din was a person who could not be considered devoid of higher education,²⁹ superior wit and eloquence, but when he found perfect confusion prevailing in the administrative set-up of the state, he was tempted to advance his political ends. Hence he collected around him his students and followers, and learned men of the state³⁰ and determined to make a bold bid for making himself master of the state. Time too was propitious for such a precipitate action. With this aim in view, he proceeded against his people, both Hindus and Muslims. He brought immense destruction in the land of the Paradise. Abdus Samad Khan was greatly agitated at the affairs of the state. However, the Nawab was helpless as Kashmir was a separate province and outside as it was of the administrative control of the Nawab, he did not consider it discreet³¹ on his part to interfere in someone else's charge. Consequently, Sharaf-ud-Din continued his depredations. Neither the Hindus nor the Muslims were spared. The Muslims bowed their heads on earth like the branch of a willow tree. The Hindus found no security for their lives even when they opted to accept his slavery.³² The people of Kashmir were being roasted in the fire of persecution that had been lit all over the ever-green valley. They were left with nothing to eat during the day while at night they had nothing to coke. The coldness of the tortuous climate had extinguished the warmth in their hearths. Even the water in the valley had lost its principal natural quality and had become so hot with the reign of terror unleashed in the valley that it had ceased even to cool the fire.³³ But since God is never late in coming to the rescue of the distressed and the wounded, the central government at the capital

appointed Abdus Samad Khan as the governor of Kashmir in addition to his existing charge. Since the Nawab had been incessantly engaged in military expeditions during the course of all these years, he thought it advisable to entrust the arrangements of this expedition to his son Nawab Zakaria Khan,³⁴ so that he should look after the welfare of the oppressed people. After sometime when the arrangements were completed, the Nawab himself embarked upon this expedition in spite of his old age and the arduous mountainous routes and he soon reached in the vicinity of that land of Paradise. Sharaf-ud-Din was a conceited person but his conceit was not the product of any intrinsic worth. He was encouraged in his precipitate action by the political vacuum created in the administrative set-up. He behaved like a lion who finds himself free to attack a herd of sheep unattended by anyone. The author has a contempt for the cowardly people of Kashmir³⁵ who were no more than a herd of sheep. Sharaf-ud-Din also behaved no better than those cowardly people and preferred to be discreet than to be shivalrous and risk his neck when faced with threat to his life. He submitted and his request for shelter was granted, and the Nawab pardoned him.

Next to Banda's struggle for emancipating the people from the foreign yoke, Sharaf-ud-Din Kashmiri's campaign was the most serious challenge to the Mughal Government in Kashmir. Unluckily, the author's account of the rebellion is very brief and sketchy. Beyond this that Sharaf-ud-Din revolted and Abdus Samad Khan undertook an expedition against him and brought him to his knees, the author does not give much which could have given his readers the background of the whole tragic episode. What he omitted it as important as that what he has given. He has nowhere mentioned that this Sharaf-ud-Din was none else than the son of Kashmir's Shaikh-ul-Isoal Mulla Abdun Nabi Mehtavi Khan, the head of the most fanatic Sunni Muslims and the most vocal section of the Muslims in Kashmir. Actually the policy of persecution adopted by Sharaf-ud-Din in Kashmir was nothing new; it was on the other hand a vigorous continuation of what his father Mulla Mehtavi Khan had planned

and pursued with unknown ruthlessness. His father, Mulla Mehtavi too had made a hell of the lives of the Hindus as well as the Shia Muslims. His religious bigotry and extreme type of sectarian fanaticism coupled with the administrative chaos and confusion born out of the Mughal governor's indifference to the woes of their charge in Kashmir, had let loose a state of complete anarchy in the State. In 1713 when Abdus Samad Khan was entrusted with the governorship of Punjab, Kashmir was made over to Inayatullah Khan by Emperor Farrukh Siyyar on the recommendation of the Sayyad brothers. He preferred to remain at the capital to safeguard his own interests at the court which had by that time become hot-bed of vicious intrigues and violet subversive manoeuvres. The governor, therefore, adopted a pernicious practice of appointing his deputy in Kashmir. Inayatullah, therefore, deputed Naib Nazim to Kashmir and himself stayed behind. However, these Naib Nazims changed with the same rapidity with which the political situation changed in the capital. In the short period of next three years, Kashmir witnessed the coming and going of no less than four Naib Nazims. In 1719, the year of Farrukh Siyyar's death Mir Ahmad Khan was the Naib Nazim. He could not control the situation. Mehtavi Khan naturally was still more tempted to fish in the troubled waters. He thought that by adopting a policy of ruthless religious persecution, he could easily realise the fulfillment of his political aspirations. In that state of political turmoil the Mulla induced him to join him in the furtherance of his political designs, but the latter refused. The Shaikh however prescribed the harshest possible punishments for the Hindus for disobeying his commands. They were not permitted to ride on horsebacks; they could not wear turbans on their heads; they could not bear arms and except during a brief period, they could not even stir out of their houses, nor permitted to go to their fields at odd hours. He ravaged all the *mohallas*, where the Hindus resided. They were cruelly tortured and were then brutally put to death. Thousands of Hindus as well as the Shias were thus done away with. The Mulla then openly revolted against him and having entered the mosque, he

declared his independence and became virtually the independent ruler of Kashmir. However, one Shia Muslim got disgusted with the way he had been treated by the Mulla and he entered the mosque and put the Mulla to death. The situation had become more dangerous now than the central government could allow. Therefore, the government deputed Momin Khan to Kashmir. He relentlessly pursued the remnants of the Shaikh's followers. The Shaikh's two sons were also killed but then finding it impossible to stem the tide, he sought to conciliate the dead Shaikh's son Sharaf-ud-Din by appointing him as the Shaikh-ul-Islam of Kashmir. The new Shaikh, however, proved no better, and he pursued his father's policy more vigorously than before. He spared neither the Hindus nor the Shias. It was his atrocious conduct that drew upon him the Nawab's wrath. The author of the *Asrar-i-Samadi* has not cared to delve deep into the matter and hence with whatever he has given the whole picture does not come into the open. But it must not be overlooked that his comments on the whole situation are no less pithy and meaningful.

The Nawab was then transferred to Multan. The writer's comments on the Nawab's transfer betray his utmost solicitude for the Nawab, his patron. The Nawab had received the Imperial Orders to relinquish the governorship of Lahore and go to Multan³⁶ as that place's governor and hand over Punjab to his son Nawab Zakaria Khan. This, according to the author, was done because the Nawab had brought peace and order to the State of Lahore and the Mughal government now wanted to punish the recalcitrant element in that province also. The Nawab was, however, reluctant to go there because of various reasons. The climate of Punjab alone suited his temperament³⁷, while that of Multan did not suit him at all. He protested, but then relented when he found the central government adamant, and agreed to go there. This, the author says, was done only to emphasise the Nawab's respect for the central government and his royal patron, the Emperor³⁸. This appears to be an oversimplification of the whole issue. In fact the transfer was effected

because the central government was getting more and more concerned at the growing incidents of restlessness and also because of the increasing attempts of the recalcitrant elements to reassert themselves. However, once the Nawab accepted the charge of Multan, he was not slow to demonstrate to his masters at Delhi that despite his old age, he still mattered in military affairs. He did not relent in his military activities. In fact, his name had acquired such an aura of grandeur that his mere presence in Multan was enough to strike terror in the hearts of petty rebel chieftains there. The first to submit were the Zamindars of Latti who used to appropriate to themselves all the revenue of the land in their territory and would not send a penny to dience the state. Similarly, the Balochi landlords too showed signs of disobey But with the coming of the Nawab, they were dissuaded by the reality of the new situation and they submitted without showing any signs of hostility.

After his departure to Multan, when he was no longer the governor of Kashmir, he never lost interest in the affairs of the Punjab and Kashmir; firstly, because of his attachment to his son and secondly because he was perhaps anxious to demonstrate his military ability periodically. During the course of his Kashmir expedition, when he was occupied in subduing Shaikh Sharaf-ud-Din, Dhrup Dev and Anand Dev, the Zamindars of Jammu, made serious attempts to exploit the difficulties of the Mughal state to their advantage. They virtually began to act as independent rulers. The *faujdar* of Jammu was then under the governorship of Lahore. These zamindars refused to pay their dues to the governor of Lahore. Rather they took possession of the *parganas* adjacent to the mountain valley. On his return from the Kashmir expedition, the Nawab had a mind to teach the refractory chiefs a lesson, but he was prevented from doing this because of the demise of his senior Begum⁴⁰. The fulfillment of his desire was deferred⁴¹. In the meantime their audacity increased to such an extent that they did not hesitate to intercept even the precious presents and other things that were sent to the Nawab from the

governor of Kashmir.⁴¹ This act of great indiscretion brought about their ultimate doom.

Now the Mughals made a threepronged attack on them. The Nawab started from Multan, Adina Beg started from the *chakla* of Sialkot, while Zakaria Khan marched from Lahore. The hillmen took shelter into the fort and started the fight. A fierce battle ensued, but they soon realised the futility of carrying on this unequal fight and offered to surrender, which was readily accepted by the Nawab who pardoned them.⁴³ Here a peculiar question arises as to why the Nawab agreed to connive at their such a serious offence and restored them to their previous charges on the condition of their agreeing to pay their dues regularly. In the initial stage the revolt of these hill chiefs was viewed with considerable consternation. Otherwise there was no need for making such huge preparations against such petty chieftains. The invitation to Adina Beg and the coming of Nawab Abdus Samad Khan from Multan clearly indicate that the Mughals did not take the campaign against the Jammu chiefs lightly. They were very serious about it. Yet, when the Mughals had almost achieved their goal, they volunteered to relinquish their hold over the gains acquired through this war. The author has not thrown any light on this side of the picture and simply states that the Nawab pardoned them and restored them to their respective charges. It appears that the Mughals had no alternative before them as they could no longer maintain their hold over such mountain fortresses without the active assistance and loyalty of the local chiefs. The subsequent events also proved the apprehensions of the Mughals when both the chiefs again revolted and refused to abide by their pledged words. As soon as, Nawab Zakaria Khan heard the news, he ordered his deputy at Jammu to march against them and himself also proceeded against them. On the receipt of information at Multan Nawab Abdus Samad Khan also left the place to join his son in that expedition and he joined his son with the maximum possible speed. His arrival in the Punjab encouraged the people of the Punjab. They thought that Rustam had arrived to help his son Sohrab.

The hillmen sought shelter in the fort of Bahu situated near Jammu but were soon expelled from that place also by the Mughal forces and scattered in the hilly areas. The victorious troops were sent against them to extirpate the very existence of the rebels. Other hill chiefs were instructed not to provide the rebels with any kind of shelter. Garrisons were placed in the inaccessible forts and other strong places. The Katoch⁴⁴ Zamindar had assisted the Mughals against the hill chiefs. But the Mughals knew that he had also been a source of considerable evils in the past. He had not permitted the garrison of the Kangra fort to get the needed supplies of food and had just like the Jammu Zamindar withheld the stipulated revenue from the governor. Despite the fact that he was at the moment with the Mughal troops, he was beguiled by the show of excessive favours and was induced to stay with them for sometime more. In the meantime the Mughal forces were despatched to his country while he himself was imprisoned by the Nawab.⁴⁵ By this tact, rather a ruse, the Mughals succeeded in destroying their real enemy. His entire country was pillaged and ravaged. Consequently, all the hill chiefs of the region hastened to offer their submission and agreed to pay tribute for years to come.

Similarly the Zamindars of Abi⁴⁶ situated on the borders of Kabul, who had chosen to tread the path of rebellion because of the distance from the Mughal court, and had started victimising their own people, also submitted and tendered fealty to the Mughals.

At the end, the author compliments the Nawab on all that he achieved during the course of his governorship in Multan, Kashmir and Lahore.

In the last chapter he has described the qualities of a benefactor and the attributes of a *derwesh* with which the historian is not very much concerned.

Lastly, suffice it to say, that the author has succeeded in deriving a double benefit from his venture of writing in Persian prose the military victories of his patron. As narrated earlier, his account

smacks neither of any fulsome eulogy nor of any flattery of his generous patron. It is a truthful description of what he had either himself seen or had heard from those who had the occasion to participate in the events. For the study of the career of the Nawab Abdus Samad Khan the study of this work along with the *Fathuhāt Nama-i-Samadi* and the *Badai Waqai* of Anand Ram Mukhlis, forms as indispensable first attempt.

REFERENCES

1. *Asrar-i-Samadi* (Persian Text) ed. Mohammad Shujah-ud-Din and Dr. Mohammad Bashir Husain (1965), published by the Research Institute Pakistan, Lahore, p. I. Intr.
- 2-46 *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4, 5, 8, 6, 9, 13, 17, 24, 25, 28, 30, 31, 33, 35, 41, 45, 46, 53 respectively.

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Massacre of the Sikhs at Delhi in 1716

John Surman and Edward Stephenson

Introductory note

Dr. Ganda Singh*

The paragraph which refers to the arrest and massacre of the Sikhs at Delhi in 1716 is extracted from a letter dated Delhi, March 10, 1716, written by Messrs. John Surman and Edward Stephenson to the Hon'ble Robert Hedges, President and Governor of Fort William, etc., Council in Bengal. These gentlemen and their Secretary, Hugh Barker, were then present in the Mughal capital as ambassadors of the East India Company's Council in Bengal to the Court of Emperor Farrukh-Siyar. Under instructions of their principals, the ambassadors maintained a regular Diary of the events and transactions at the royal court, and wrote to Calcutta to keep the headquarters informed of the political and other developments there. This letter of March 10, 1716, was read at a consultation at Fort St. George on Tuesday, 5th June, 1716 and is to be found in the Madras Diary and consultation Book for 1715 to 1719, NO. 87, Range 237, in the India Office (now Commonwealth Relations Office), London. It is also reproduced in C. R. Wolson's *The Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, volume II part II (Calcutta, 1911), pp. 96-98, and in J. T. Wheeler's *Early Records of British India*, p. 180.

* *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, Calcutta, 1962.

The chief of the Sikhs, Banda Singh, referred to in the letter as "the great Rebel. Gooroo", was initiated into the Sikh order of the *Khalsa* in September 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh at Nander in the Deccan where he had gone in connection with the negotiations that had been going on with Empeor Bahadur Shah (1707-12) since July 1707. There the Guru was stabbed by a Pathan from Sirhind in the last week of September, 1708 and he died of his wound on October 6-7. The line of the Sikh Gurus that had began with Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikh religion, came to an end with the tenth and the last Guru Gobind Singh who bequeathed spiritual heritage of Sikhism to the Sikh holy book, *Guru Granth Sahib*, and the temporal leadership of the Sikhs to the general body of the Khalsa.

Before the death of the Guru, however, Banda Singh, with the renewed zeal and vigour of a new leader, had left for the Panjab, not as Guru of the Sikhs but as commander of the forces of the Khalsa. Here the Sikhs gathered round him in large numbers and in the summer of 1710 he was soon able to carve out a small Sikh kingdom which, later, paved the way for the freedom of the country from under the Mughal yoke. But the Mughal empire was too strom for the infant power of the Sikhs under Banda Singh. He was captured in Decempber 1715, during the reign of Emperor Farruk-Siyar, under whose orders he was carried to Delhi as a prisoner along with 694 other Sikhs. Here they were all, with exception of Banda Singh and a few chosen leaders, executed in the *maidan* opposite the *Chandni Chauk Kotwali* at the rate of a hundred a day beginning on March 5, 1716. The turn of Banda Singh himself and his associates came three months later on June 9, when he was taken out to the Qutab Minar and torn to pieces near the tomb of Emperor Bahadur Shah.

C. R. Wilson, the author of the *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, he has given in the volume II, part II, pp. xiii-xiiii, the following description of the entry of Banda Singh and his fellow captives into Delhi on February 27, 1716, based on the articles of William Irwine on the *Political History of the Sikhs* (*Asiatic Quarterly*, January 1894, pp. 420-31) and *Guru Gobind Singh and Bandah* (*Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for 1894, part I, pp. 112-43). He says :

The ceremonial on this occasion was copied from that observed after the capture of the Maratha Sambhaji. Malice did its utmost to cover the vanquished with ridicule and shame. First came the heads of the executed Sikhs, stuffed with straw, the stuck on bamboos, their long hair streaming in the wind like a veil along with them to show that every living creature in Gurdaspore had perished, a dead cat on a pole.

The teacher himself, dressed out of mockery in a turban of red cloth, embroidered with gold, and a heavy robe of brocade, flowered with pomegranates, sat in an iron cage, placed on the back of an elephant. Behind him stood a mail-clad officer, with a drawn sword. After him came the other prisoners, seven hundred and forty in number, seated two and two upon camels without saddles. Each wore a high fool's cap of sheep skin and had one hand pinned to his neck, between two pieces of wood. Many were also dressed in sheep skins with woolly side turned out wards. At the end of the procession rode three great nobles. Muhammad Amin Khan, sent by the emperor to bring in the prisoners [from Agharabad to the Lahori gate to the palace] Kamr-ud-Din, his son, and Zakariya Khan, his son-in-law, who being also the son of Abdus-Samad Khan had been deputed to represent his father at the ceremony. The road to the palace, for several miles, was lined with troops and filled with exultant crowds, who mocked at the teacher and laughed at the grotesque appearance of his followers. They wagged their heads and pointed the finger of scorn at the poor wretched as they passed. 'Hu ! Hu !, infidel dog-worshippers, your day has come. Truly retribution follows on transgression, as wheat springs from wheat, and barley from barley.' Yet the triumph could not have seemed complete. Not all the insults that their enemies had invented could rob the teacher and his followers of their dignity. Without any sign of dejection or shame, they rode on, calm, chereful, even anxious to die the death of martyrs.

Life was promised to any who would renounce thier faith, but they would not prove false to their Guru, and at the place of suffering their constancy was wonderful to look at. 'Me, deliverer, kill me first' was the paryer which conxtantly range in the ears of the executioner. One there was, a youngman, an only son, whose widow mother had made many applications to the Mughal officers, declaring that her son

was a Sikh prisoner, and no follower of the Guru. A release was granted and she hastened to the prison-house to claim her son. But the boy turned from her to meet his doom crying 'I know not this woman. What does she want with me? I am a true and loyal follower of the Guru.' For a whole week the sword of the executioner did its butcher's work. Every day a hundred brave men perished and at night the headless bodies were loaded into carts, taken out of the city, and hung upon trees. It was not till June 19 (Sunday, the 29th Jamadi-ul-Akhir, 1128, A. H., June 9, 1716 O.S.) that Banda himself was led out to execution, all efforts having failed to buy him off. They dressed him, as on the day of his entry, set him again on an elephant, and took him away to the old city, where the red Qutab Minar lifts its proud head of white marble over the crumbling walls of the Hindu fortress. Here they paraded him round the tomb of the late emperor, Bahadur Shah, and put him to a barbarous death. First they made him dismount, placed his child in his arms and bade him kill it. Then, as he shrank with horror from the act, they ripped open the child before its father's eyes, thrust its quivering flesh into his mouth and hacked him to pieces limb by limb.

The authors of the despatch John Surman and Edward Stephenson (and their Secretary Hugh Barker) were evidently, eyewitnesses of the dreadful massacre of the Sikhs at Delhi in March recorded by them. The executions began on March 5, five days before the date of the despatch, March 10, when a few hundred Sikhs had yet to be executed. This paragraph of the despatch, therefore, is of great historical value to the students and scholars of history. The last sentence regarding the unflinching devotion of the Sikhs to their faith under the severest of trials is very significant.

Except for the number of the Sikh prisoners, which Muhammad Hadi Kamwar Khan gives as 694 in his *Tazkirat-us-Salatin*, the despatch of the English ambassadors is in full agreement with the writings of the other eye-witnesses and contemporaries. The reader interested in further study of the exploits and achievements of Banda Singh is referred of *Life of Banda Singh Bahadur* published in 1935, and the bibliography appended to it.

LETTER XII

The Honourble Robert Hedges Esq.

Presideht & Governor of fort William, & Council in Bengal.

Honourable Sirs, etc.

We wrote your honours on the 7th ultimo since which we have received no letters.

The great Gooroo [Banda Singh] who has been for these 20 years so troublesome in the Subaship [*suba*] of lahere is at length taken with all his family and attendance by Abd-us-Sarnad Cawn the Suba [*subedar*, i.e. Governor] of that province. Some days ago they entered the city laden with fetters, his whole attendants which werel eft alive being about seven hundred and eighty all severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the City for that purpose, beside about two thousand heads stuck poles, being those who died by the sword in battle. He was carried into the presence of the King, and from thence to the close prison. He, at present, has his life prolonged with most *mutsuiddys* in the hope to get an Account of his treasure in the several parts of his kingdom, and of those assisted him, when afterwards he will be executed, for the rest there are 100 each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what partience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatised from his new formed Religion.

Dilly,

March the 10th, 1716.

We are,

Honourable Sir & Sirs,

Your most obedient humble servants,

John Surman,

Edward Stephenson.

Cojee Seerhaud assenting.

Hugh Barker, Secretary.

Malcolm's Statement

"The first check the Sikhs received was from an army under Sultan Kuli Khan. That Chief defeated one of their advanced corps at panipat, which after being dispersed, fled to join their leader Banda, at Sarhind, The death of Behadur Shah prevented this success from being pursued, and the confusion which followed at that event, was favourable to the sikhs. Banda defeats Islam Khan, the viceroy of Lahore, and one of his fanatic followers stabbed Bayezid Khan, the governor of Sarhind, who had marched out of the town to encounter the army. This however, was the last of Banda's successful atrocities. Abdal Samad Khan, a general of great reputation, was detached, with a large army, by the emperor Farakhseir against the Sikhs, whom he defeated in a very desperate action, in which agreeable to Muhammedan authors, Banda performed prodigies of Valour, and was only obliged to give way to the superior number and discipline of the imperialists. The sikhs were never able to make a stand after this defeat and were hunted, like wild beasts, from one strong hold to another, by the army of the emperor, by whom their leader, and his most devoted followers, were at last taken, after having suffered every extreme of hunger and fatigue.

Abdal Samad Khan put to death great number of the Sikhs after the surrender of Lohgad, the fortress in which they took refuge, but sent Banda, and the principal chiefs of the tribe to Delhi, where they were first treated with every kind of obloquy and insult, and then executed. A Muhammedan writer relates the intrepidity with which these sikh prisoners, but particularly their leader, Banda, met death. "It is singular" he writes "that these people not only behaved firmly during the

execution, but they would dispute and wrangle with each other "who should suffer first, and they made interest with the executioner to obtain the preference. Banda, "he continues, "was at last produced, his "son being seated in his lap. His father was ordered to cut his throat, which he did, without uttering one word. Being then brought nearer the magistrate's tribunal, the latter ordered his flesh to be torn off with red hot pincers; and it was in those moments he expired; his black soul taking its flight, by one of those wounds, towards the regions for which it was so well fitted.

Thus perished Banda, who, though a brave and able leader was one of the most cruel and ferocious of men, and endeavoured to impart to his followers that feeling of merciless sentimentality which he cherished of against the whole Muhammedan race, whom he appears to have thought accountable for the cruelty and oppression of a few individuals of the persuasion.

Though the sikhs, from being aminated by a similar feeling and encouraged by his first success, followed Banda to the field, they do not revere his memory."

Sketch of the Sikhs : Their origin, Customs And Manners. (1812, reproduced, Chandigarh 1981, pp. 62-65)

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Cunnigham's Account

(History of The Sikhs, New Delhi, 1985)

"The Sikhs gathered in numbers round Banda when he reached the north-west, bearing with him the arrow of Gobind as the pledge of victory. Banda put to flight the Mughal authorities in the neighbourhood of Sirhind, and then attacked, defeated and slew the governor of the province. Sirhind was plundered and the Hindu betrayer and Musلمان destroyer of Gobind's Children were themselves put to death by the avenging Sikhs. Banda next established a stronghold below the hills of sermur,¹ he occupied the country between the Sutlej and Jumna, and he laid waste the district of Saharanpur.² Banda was surrounded in his new stronghold. A zealous convert disguised like his leader allowed himself to be captured during a sally of the besieged and Banda withdrew with all his followers.³ After some successful skirmishes he established himself near Jammu in the hills north of Lahore, and laid the fairest part of the Punjab under contribution. Bahadur Shah had by this time advanced to Lahore in person, and he died there in the month of February, 1712.⁴

The death of the emperor brought on another contest for the throne. His eldest son, Jahandar Shah, retained power for a year, but in February 1713 he was defeated and put to death by his nephew Farrukhsiyar. These commotions were favourable to the Sikhs; they again became united and formidable and they built for themselves a considerable fort, named Gurdaspur, between the Beas and Ravi.⁵ The viceroy of Lahore marched against Banda, but he was defeated in a pitched battle and the Sikhs sent forward a party towards Sirhind, the governor of which,

Bayazid Khan, advanced to oppose them. A fanatic crept under his tent and mortally wounded him; the Muhammadans dispersed, but the city does not seem to have fallen a second time a prey to the exulting Sikhs.⁶ The emperor now ordered Abdus Samad Khan, the governor of Kashmir, a Trurani noble and a skilful general, to assume the command in the Punjab, and he sent to his aid some chosen troops from the eastward. Abdus Samad Khan brought with him some thousands of his own warlike countrymen, and as soon as he was in possession of a train of artillery he left Lahore, and falling upon the Sikh army he defeated it, after a fierce resistance on the part of Banda. The success was followed up, and Banda retreated from post to post, fighting valiantly and inflicting heavy losses on his victors; but he was at length compelled to shelter himself in the fort of Gurdaspur. He was closely besieged; nothing could be conveyed to him from without; and after consuming all his provisions, and eating horses, asses, and even the forbidden ox, he was reduced to submit.⁷ Some of the Sikhs were put to death, and their heads were borne on pikes before Banda and others as they were marched to Delhi with all the signs of ignominy usual bigots, and common among barbarous or half-civilized conquerors.⁸ A hundred Sikhs were put to death daily, contending among themselves for priority of martyrdom, and on the eighth day Banda himself was arraigned before his judges. A Muhammadan noble asked Banda from conviction, how one of his knowledge and understanding could commit crimes which would dash him into hell; but Banda answered that he had been as a mere scourge in the hands of god for the chastisement of the wicked, and that he was now receiving the meed of his own crimes against the Almighty. His son was placed upon his knees, a knife was put into his hands, and he was required to take the life of his child. He did so, silent and unmoved; his own flesh was then torn with red-hot pincers, and amid these torments he expired, his dark soul, say the Muhammadans, winging its way to the regions of the damned.⁹

The memory of Banda is not held in much esteem by the Sikhs; he appears to have been of a gloomy disposition, and he was obeyed as an energetic and daring leader, without being able to engage the personal sympathies of his followers. He did not perhaps comprehend the general

nature of Nanak's and Gobind's reforms; the spirit of sectarianism possessed him and he endeavoured to introduce changes into the modes and practices enjoined by these teaching, which should be more in accordance with his own ascetic and Hindu notions. These unwise innovations and restrictions were resisted by the more zealous Sikhs, and they may have caused the memory of a able and enterprising leader to be generally neglected.

After the death of Banda an active persecution was kept up against the Sikhs¹⁰, whose losses in battle had been great and depressing. All who could be seized had to suffer death, or to renounce their faith. A price, indeed, was put upon their heads, and so vigorously were the measures of prudence, or of vengeance followed up, that many conformed to Hinduism; other abandoned the outward signs of their belief, and the more sincere had to seek a refuge among the recesses of the hills, or in the woods to the south of the Sutlej. The Sikhs were scarcely again heard of in history for the period of a generation.¹¹

Thus, at the end of two centuries, had the Sikh faith become established as a prevailing sentiment and guiding principle to work its way in the world. Nanak disengaged his little society of worshippers from Hindu idolatry and Muhammadan superstition, and placed them free on a broad basis of religious and moral purity; Amar Das preserved the infant community from declining into a sect of quietists or ascetics; Arjun gave his increasing followers a written rule of conduct and a civil organization; Har Gobind added the use of arms and a military system; and Gobind Singh bestowed upon them a distinct political existence, and inspired them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent. No further legislation was required; a firm persuasion had been elaborated, and a vague feeling had acquired consistence as an active principle. The operation of this faith become a fact, is only now in progress, and the fruit it may yet bear cannot be foreseen. Sikhism arose where fallen and corrupt Brahmanical doctrines were most strogly acted on by the vital and spreading Muhammadan belief. It has now come into contact with the civilization and Christianity of Europe, and the result can only be known to a distant posterity.

REFERENCES

1. This was at Mukhlispur near Sadhaura, which lies north-west from Ambala and it appears to be Lohgarh 'that is the iron or strong fort..
2. Forster, I, 304.
3. Cf. Elphinstone, *History* ii. 566, and Forster *Travels*, i, 304. The zeal of the devotee was applauded without being pardoned by the emperor.
4. Cf. the *Siar ul Mutakharin*, i, 109, 112.
5. Gurdaspur is near Kalanaur, where Akbar was saluted as emperor and it appears to be the Lohgarh of the ordinary accounts followed by Forster, Malcolm, and others. It now contains a monastery of Sarsut Brahmans, who have adopted many of the Sikh modes and tenets.
6. Some account nevertheless represent Banda to have again possessed himself of Sirhind.
7. Cf. Malcolm *Sketch*, pp. 79, 80; Forster *Travels*, i, 306 and note; and the *Siar ul Mutakharin*, i, 116, 117. The ordinary accounts make the Sikh army amount to 35,000 men (Forster says 20,000); they also detain Abdus Samad a year at Lahore before he undertook anything and they bring down all the hill chiefs of his aid, both of which circumstances are probable enough.
8. *Siar ul Mutakharin*, i, 118, 120 Elphinstone (*History*, ii. 574, 575), quoting the contemporary Khafi Khan, says the prisoners amounted to 740. The *Siar ul Mutakharin* relates how the old mother of Bayazid Khan killed the assassin of her son, by letting fall a stone on his head, as he and the other prisoners were being led through the streets of Lahore.
9. Malcolm (*Sketch*, p. 82) who quotes the *Siar ul Mutakharin*. The defeat and death of Banda are placed by the *Siar ul Mutakharin* (i. 109), by Orme (*History*, ii, 22), and apparently by Elphinstone (*History*, ii, 564), in the year A.D. 1716; but Forster (*Travels*, i, 306 note) has the date 1714.
10. Cf. Malcolm, *Sketch*, pp. 83-84.
11. Cf. Forster (*Travels*, i, 312, 313) and Browne (*India Tracts*, ii, 13), and also Malcolm (*Sketch*, pp. 85. 86).

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Sikhs Conquests Under Banda (1708-1716)

Sir Gokul Chand Narang*

Banda was born in 1670 A.D. at Rajowri, a village in the little hill State of Poonch, a feudatory of His Highness of Jammu and Kashmir. His original name was Lachhman Dev. His father's name was Ram Dev and he was a Rajput of the Dogra tribe. In his earlier days Lachhman Dev was very fond of hunting, but one day he killed a doe, and as he cut her open, two little cubs came out alive and breathed their last in a few minutes before his very eyes. Lachhman Dev was so touched with the sight that he not only gave up hunting but renounced the world, became a *Bairagi* receiving the new name of Madho Das,¹ and joined a party of Sadhus and set off with them on a tour of pilgrimage. In course of time he attained great fame for his learning, piety and miraculous powers with which the people of those days readily invested any one endowed with extraordinary attainments like Banda. He now ceased wandering and settled in princely fashion in the little quite village of Nanderh situated on the banks of the Godawari in Hyderabad State.

It was here that the meeting between him and Guru Gobing Singh took place in 1708 A.D. The Guru while travelling in the Deccan, happened to halt at Nanderh, and hearing a great deal about the ascetic went to see him. He at once found out what stuff the Bairagi was made

* *Translation of Sikhism*, New Book Society, Lahore, 1912, pp. 163-189.

of, and the Guru fixed upon him as the future leader of the Khalsa who would carry out his great designs. An intimate friendship soon grew up between them, and the persuasive eloquence and religious zeal of the Guru made such a deep impression on the mind of Madho Das that he became a disciple of the Guru, called himself his *banda* or slave, and threw himself entirely at his service. The Guru was exceedingly pleased at this triumph and at once accepted the offer of Madho Das's service. The Guru had told him all about his aims and ambitions, his sufferings and disasters. He now appealed to his new disciple to take up his work, avenge the blood of his father and his innocent children, and strike a blow at the Moghul despotism and emancipate his race from the yoke of thralldom.

He gave him a sword and five arrows from his own quiver and enjoined upon him the following five commandments :-

- (1) Do not approach a woman, but lead a life of chastity and celibacy.²
- (2) Always think the truth, speak the truth and act the truth.
- (3) Regard yourself as a servant of the Khalsa and always act in accordance with its wishes.
- (4) Do not try to found any sect of your own.
- (5) Do not let victories elate you or kingly pride turn your head.

Banda received the sword and arrows with profound reverence and solemnly promised to obey the commands of the Guru. The Guru gave him a letter addressed to the Sikhs of the Punjab calling upon all to acknowledge Banda as their leader and fight under his flag. He also gave him a drum and a banner of his own, and putting twenty-five of his chosen followers at his service he sent him to the Punjab to carry on the work which he had undertaken and left unaccomplished.

When Banda reached the Punjab, thousands of Sikhs flocked to him, ready to fight and die under his banner.³ The army which now assembled under the command of Banda consisted of three classes of persons.

The first class comprised the true and loyal Sikhs who had sat at the feet of Guru Gobind himself and had been touched by the Promethean fire which animated the great pontiff himself. They rallied round Banda

in a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice to carry on the crusade against the enemies of their race and religion. They had no booty, no self-aggrandisement, as their object. On the contrary, hundreds sold all their little belongings, purchased arms, and flocked to the new leader with a fixed determination either to win the fight or to suffer martyrdom.

The second class consisted of mercenaries who had been recruited and sent on to Banda by such chieftains, as Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phool family, who, not being quite sanguine about the success of the new movement, did not like to run the risk of losing court favour and their possessions, and could not venture to join personally the army of Banda. They secretly paid for the arms and accoutrements of large bodies of troops and keeping themselves in the background continued to help the movement in a clandestine way.

The third class was entirely composed of the irregulars who were attracted to Banda by the love of booty and punder. They were professional robbers and dacoits, men of reckless daring, who hailed the movement as a golden opportunity offering prospects of plundering cities and towns instead of solitary wayfarers or caravans of merchants.

By the time Banda reached the precincts of Sarhind, he had collected a large army.⁴ His first object was to take and destroy that town to avenge the blood of the infant sons of Guru Gobind Singh who had been brutally put to death there.

When he arrived at the town of Kythal, report was brought him that a large amount of treasure was being taken to Delhi and that the guard in charge of the treasure had halted at the village of Bhoona. He at once fell upon them, cut them to pieces and carried away every farthing of the money, the whole of which was at once distributed among his troops to their great joy and encouragement. The town of Kythal was given to plunder after which Banda advanced upon Samana, the native village of Jalal-ud-Din, the executioner, by whom Tegh Bahadur had been put to death. The town was looted and Muhammdans to the number of 10,000 were put to death.⁵ The towns of Ghuram, Thaska, Ambala, Kunjpur, Mustafabad and Kapuri,⁶ were plundered, and Muslim officers punished for their tyranny and oppression. Sadhowra was the next to

fall. The Moslems of the town took refuge in the mansion of the Syeds but Banda gave them no quarters and all were mercilessly put to the sword.

The place still exists and is known as *Qatlgarhi* or the Slaughter House. Banda next took possession of the fort of Mukhlispur and named it Lohgarh. Chhat and Banur, the Moslems of which attracted Bands's notice by their bigotry and slaughter of cows were the next to fall their Moslem inhabitants were as usual put to the sword.

Small as these victories were, they served to encourage the followers of Banda and attracted thousands to his flag by the time he advanced upon Sarhind. It was here that the infant sons of the Guru had been brutally done to death, and the place represented to the minds of the Sikhs all that was mean and hateful, and the faithful followers of Govind burnt with longing for an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon the murderous town. It was looked as a sacred duty to take part in the coming battle of Sarhind, and the desire for martyrdom had brought thousands from Majha and Malwa to join in the attack. Thousands had also been attracted by the prospect of plunder, as Sarhind, being the headquarter of the Porvince of that name, promised to provide a rich booty to the victors.

The famous battle was fought on the 30th of May 1710 A.D.⁷ Wazir Khan, the Governor, assisted by Sher Muhammad and Khawaja Ali of Maler Kotla led his tropps in person. He had a number of field guns, Zamburaks and a long line of elephants. Banda, on the other hand, had no guns or elephants and not even a sufficient supply of good horses. As soon as the battle began and the Moghul artillery opened fire, the dacoits and robbers whom the love of booty had brought together took to their heels, leaving the faithful Sikhs alone to fight out the battle. Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharm Singh and Ali Singh commanded the cotingent from Malwa and Baj Singh and Binod Singh led those of Majha. Banda himself fought like a true soldier in the forefront of his army. Religious zeal triumphed over the cannon and superior numbers of the Moghuls. Wazir Khan himself was slain with his Diwan. The city was given to plunder and the Mohammadaris were ruthlessly massacred without any distinction of sex or age.⁸

The plunder of Sarhind continued for three days. On the fourth day it was stopped by order. Baj Singh,⁹ the commander of Majha Singhs was appointed Governor of Sarhind with Ali Singh, the leader of Malwa Singhs, as his Naib.

Fateh Singh was appointed Governor of Samana and Ram Singh, a brother of Baj Singh, the Governor of Thaneswar jointly with Baba Binod Singh. The Moslem Hakims of all the 28 Parganas of Sarhind were replaced by Hindus and most of the country between the Sutlej and the Jamuna passed into the hands of the Sikhs.

Banda was now looked upon as the champion of Hinduism¹⁰ and marched eastward on receiving a complaint from the Hindus of Dev Band who were being cruelly treated by Jalal-ud-Din, the Hakim of Jalalabad.¹¹ He fell upon Saharanpur¹² which was deserted by its Hakim, Ali Mohammad, and was sacked by the Sikhs. His attention was next drawn to Behat,¹³ the *Peerzadas* of which seemed to take particular pleasure in slaughtering non-muslims. Needless to say that the place was looted and the family building and the town destroyed. Before the Sikhs reached Jalalabad they reduced every town and village that fell on the way, most important of which were Ambeta and Nanuata. An account of the battle of Nanuata is reproduced in the *Calcutta Review*¹⁴ from the diary of one Muhammad Zafar-ud-Din who was an eye-witness to the whole affair. Three hundred Shaikhzadas were killed in one quarter of the town which was reduced to ruins and is still known as "Phoota Shahr" or the Ruined Town.¹⁵ Jallalabad was reached next and was besieged. The Afghans fought bravely and the rainy season having set in and the country around being exhausted, Banda gave up the seige.¹⁶ He next took Karnal and reduced the whole country up to Panipat.¹⁷ The Sikhs were now in the province of Delhi proper and the reports of their ravages were daily pouring in from all sides. They were now supreme from Sarhind to Panipat and "there was no nobleman daring enough to march from Delhi against them. Nizam-ul-Mulk Asif-ud-Daula Asad Khan,¹⁸ the Governor of the Capital, was greatly alarmed and behaved in a most pusillanimous manner, and the inhabitants were seized with terror and fled for shelter with their families to the eastern provinces."¹⁹

The Emperor was away. The generals and noblemen were all afraid of Banda. The road from Panipat to Delhi lay open but somehow the Sikhs did not venture further.²⁰ It might have been due to their fear of the Emperor who had been alarmed by the reports²¹ of the Sikh aggression and was hastening back.²² The Emperor did not even enter his capital to take breath after his southern successes but marched straight on towards Sarhind to punish the Sikhs. The vanguard of the Imperial army led by Mahabat Khan Sipahsalar, and Feroz Khan Mewati²³ came into collision with the troops of Ram Singh and Binod Singh, the deputies of Banda in Thaneswar and Trawari. A battle was fought on the 10th of November 1710 A.D. at Aminabad, a village situated on the royal road, between Thaneswar and Trawari. The Sikhs were defeated with great slaughter. Even the wounded and the dying were not spared and were hanged by their hair,²⁴ on the trees with other prisoners of war. The arrival of the Imperial troops had once more inspired the demoralised Moghul Governor with courage. Shams Khan, the Foujdar or Governor of Jullundur Doab, who had fallen upon a section of the Sikh army with a fanatical army of one hundred thousand, defeated them at Rahon, near Sultanpore, (Khafi Khan).²⁵

Banda took up his position in the fort of Lohgarh² which stood on a steep hill a few miles from Sadhaura.²⁶ The fort was besieged by the Imperial army under the direct command of the Emperor who had joined the expedition with his four sons.²⁷ The following account of the siege given by Iradat Khan, who was an eyewitness of the whole scene will be found interesting.

The Emperor's orders to his *Omerahs* were to the effect that they were not to attack the Sikhs in their strong posts, under any pretence, but were to use every means in their power to induce them to sally forth from the forts. After the contending parties had remained inactive for some days, Khan-i-Khanan sallied forth with a number of his troops to reconnoitre his adversary's position. When, however, he had arrived within cannon-shot of their position the enemy opened fire on the royal troops, while their musketeers and archers who occupied some of the surrounding elevations, volleyed in their messages of death in quick succession.

The Imperial troops could not longer be held in check. The order was given to advance to the attack. Khan-i-Khanan dismounted from his horse and led his troops on foot up the most difficult heights, driving the enemy from them with great slaughter. This scene passing within sight of the royal camps, the chiefs and soldiers, emulous of glory, waited not for orders, but hastened to join the attack in great numbers, while the emperor and the four princes who accompanied him were eager spectators of the whole scene. The Imperial troops carried all before them, driving the enemy from the heights surrounding the fortress. The Sikhs were compelled to retreat to the central fort which had only narrow approaches, difficult of access to recommend it without good means of resistance. The defenders fought desperately but would have been completely annihilated, had not the darkness of night given them a further reprieve by rendering friends and foes undistinguishable to each other. The attack was renewed about dawn and the fort taken after a short struggle. The Sikh chieftain effected his escape during the night by effected path leading from the fort to the hills, which had escaped the general's notice, and retreated into the wildest parts of the snowy range of the Himalayas. Banda knew well how to disguise himself and so dexterous was he in this accomplishment that his most intimate acquaintances were unable to recognise him when he wished to evade detection.²⁸ When he wished to be known he appeared as a prince in the riches and most showy garments. When secrecy was his object, he generally took the guise of a *jogi* or *Sanniassi*.²⁹

To preclude the possibility of a pursuit Banda had accepted the loyal offer of a devoted servant, named Gulab Singh³⁰ who bore an exact likeness to him in features, and had left him behind to personate him.³¹ Khan-i-Khanan entered the fort in triumph and was transported with joy to find "Banda" among the prisoners of war. He was, however, soon disillusioned to the Emperor's great disappointment and indignation which led to the disgrace of the aged minister.³²

Banda had made his escape to Nahan and all attempts to capture him proved fruitless. After this victory the Emperor passed some time at Sadhowra hunting in the lower hills. He was still there when Banda appeared again at Pathankot. Bayazid Khan, Governor of Jammoo, with

his nephew Shams Khan, advanced to meet him, but they were defeated and both killed in the action.³³ The Emperor now hastened towards Lahore and sent Muhammad Amin Khan and Rustam Dil Khan against the Sikh leader. The diplomatic Banda, however, again fled into the hills and was soon beyond the reach of the Imperial Generals. The Emperor passed six or seven months peacefully in Lahore but he developed signs of insanity and died in February 1712.³⁴

The death of the Emperor was the signal for the usual struggles for the throne amongst the various claimants. These commotions favoured the cause of the Sikhs. Jahandar Shah, who succeeded, reigned for a few months, and appointed Zabardast Khan, Governor of Lahore. Both were, however, incompetent to rule. Farrukhsiyar removed Jahandar from the throne and appointed Abdul Samad Diler Jung, Governor of Lahore.³⁵ The years 1712; and 1713 were most unfavourable to the Sikhs. Thousands had been captured and put to death and the year 1714 was visited by a deadly famine. In 1714 Banda again descended from the hills and fell upon the country round Batala and Kalanour.³⁶

The new Governor of Lahore and Muhammad Amin Khan were immediately sent after him, but he again retreated into the hills and eluded the Imperial troops. About a year and a half passed in peace. Early in 1716, however, Banda suddenly fell upon Kalanour and Batala which had escaped his former depredations. Both the towns were now sacked and numbers of Muhammadans, including the famous family of Shaikh-ul-Ahamd, were put to death.

Farrukhsiyar was exasperated to hear the news of these fresh disasters. He sent strict orders to the Nazim of Lahore to destroy the power of Banda. Abdul Samad accordingly set out in pursuit of Banda with a large army of chosen warriors and a powerful artillery.³⁷

Banda was defeated at Kot Mirza Jan near Kalanour and was forced to retreat from post to post, fighting valiantly and inflicting heavy losses on his victors. He was at length compelled to shelter himself in the fort of Gurdaspore.³⁸ He was closely besieged; nothing could be conveyed to him from without; and after consuming all his provisions, and eating horses, asses and even the forbidden ox he was reduced to submit.³⁹ Some of the Sikhs were put to death and their heads borne on

pikes before Banda and others as they were marched to Delhi with all the signs of ignominy usual with bigots and current among barbarous or half civilized conquerors.⁴⁰ The Muhammadan army dreaded Banda as a great sorcerer, and to prevent his escape, they confined him in an iron cage chained with a Moghul officer who was to plunge his dagger into him if he attempted to fly.⁴¹ He was brought to Delhi with 740 followers all in chains preceded by 2,000 Sikh heads on pikes.⁴²

"In order to give them a contemptible and ludicrous appearance they were forced to dress themselves in sheep skins and were then mounted on asses and camels and exhibited in all the thoroughfares and places of public resort of the city. Banda was placed on an elephant with his face smeared with black and a woollen cap placed over his head, and an executioner standing over him, sword in hand. He was made to take the lead, as their mock chief."⁴³ One hundred of them were publicly beheaded everyday until all but Banda were removed. They met their doom with the utmost indifference; nay, they even clamoured for priority of martyrdom."⁴⁴ On the eighth day Banda himself was arraigned before his judges. "He was dragged from his cage like a wild beast and then dressed in a princely robe embroidered with gold and a scarlet turban. The heads of his followers, who had been previously executed were paraded on pikes all round him. The executioner, with a drawn sabre stood behind him in readiness to carry out the sentence of his judges. All the *Omerahs* of the court tauntingly asked him why he, a man of such unquestionable knowledge and ability had committed such outrageous offences. He retorted that he was a scourge in the hands of the Almighty for the chastisement of evil-doers and that power was now given to others to chastise him for his transgressions. His son was now placed in his lap, and he was ordered to cut his throat, a knife being handed to him for that purpose."⁴⁵ He did so, silent and unmoved; his own flesh was then torn with red hot pincers, and amid these torments he expired."

It is of course undeniable that the man who brought about a revolution in the character of the Sikhs and breathed a new life into them was Govind Singh. But it may be said without any fear of contradiction that it was Banda who taught them first how to fight and

conquer. Without the least disparagement to the extraordinary genius and military ability of the Tenth Guru, it may be pointed out that his activities were mainly confined to desultory warfare with the petty chiefs of the hill States and the first time he came into serious collision with the Imperial troops, he found the shock too great for him. His warfare may, without any irreverence, be called the rehearsal of the great drama which the Sikhs were to enact under the guidance of Banda. The plot was of the Guru's conception, some actors were prepared and trained by him, but it was Banda who brought them out and made them play as it were before the full house. Whereas the Guru's possessions had not even temporarily extended much beyond the confines of the hills, the whole country from Lahore to Panipat lay for once practically at Banda's feet.⁴⁶ His great successes gave Sikhism a prestige and a power which had never yet been associated with it. Those who had never heard the names of the Gurus were impressed with its grandeur by the victories of Banda and joined his ranks in thousands. His personal magnetism too was, and his undaunted courage and extraordinary valour knit his followers closely to him. The fact that not a single Sikh out of the thousands captured and executed by the Moghul Government renounced his faith to save his life was no less due to the exemplary piety and lofty character of Banda than to the inspiration of his predecessor. Guru Govind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. He had sown the seed, Banda reaped the harvest. The Guru had enunciated principles, Banda carried them into practice. Govind had destroyed the awe inspired by the Moghul despotism. Banda completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus, after centuries of subjection, realised under Banda that they could still fight and conquer, and when he fell, the dreams of Khalsa supremacy inspired by Govind were considerably nearer the point of realisation.

REFERENCES

1. Although Banda's military operations against the Moghul Government were so serious that the Emperor had to take the field against him in person, the accounts of his doings given by English historians are extremely meagre. I have, therefore, dwelt upon his achievements at greater length than might seem necessary for the purposes of this work.
2. The Guru attached great importance to a continent life which he had himself adopted before entering upon his warlike career. His second wife, Sahib Devan showed an anxiety for a child but the Guru consoled her by saying that the whole Khalsa would be as a child unto her. Every Sikh accordingly is told at the time of baptism that henceforth his caste will be Sodhi. (Govind's caste) and his parents Govind Singh and Sahib Devan.
3. According to Muhammad Qasim and Khafi Khan, people believed ABanda to be an incarnation of Guru Govind Singh.
4. According to Khafi Khan in 2 or 3 months 4,000 horsemen and seven or eight thousand foot joined him and their number soon reached 8 or 9 thousand and rose at last to 40,000.
5. *Banda Bahadur*.
6. Kapuri is a village four miles from Sadhowra in the Ambala district. The Hakim of this place was a tyant and libertine of the worst type. There was hardly a family in the town whose honour had not been destroyed by his lust. His name was Kadam-ud-Din Khan.
7. Khafi Khan gives a detailed and vivid account of the battle.
8. They butchered, bayoneted, strangled, hanged, shot down, hacked to pieces and burnt alive every Muhammadan in the place. Nor was this all. The dead, too, were made to contribute their share towards gratifying the rage of these voracious vampires.... The sanctity of the graveyard was violated, and corpses were exhumed, hewn to pieces and exposed as carrion, etc." Latif's *History of the Punjab*. This seems to be much exaggerated. The mausoleum of Ahmad Shah, the most magnificent of all such buildings, still stands as it did before the battle and is I think sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement above, which nevertheless, is corroborated by Khafi Khan who adds that even wombs of pregnant women were ripped open and babies cut to pieces.
9. Baj Singh, a jat of Ball caste and a native of Mir Pur Patti in Amritsar (?) district, was a disciple of Govind Singh whom he had accompanied to the Deccan. He was one of those sent by Govind as advisers with Banda. He accompanied Banda throughout his wars with his brothers Ram Singh, Sham Singh and Kuber Singh and lastly he was one of those who suffered martyrdom with Banda at Delhi in 1716 A.D. His name is mentioned by Muhammad Qasim as Baz Singh. See *Ibrat Nama* f. 29 In *Tarikh-i-Muhammad Shahi* he is called Bakht Singh.
10. He believed himself and was regarded by the Hindus as the scourge of Muhammadans sent by God to punish them for their crimes. Oppressed Hindus resorted to him for help which was willingly and efficiently given, a fact which had a great influence in promoting the growth of the Sikh power. The slayers of kine were given no quarters and this alone was sufficient to win over the sympathies of the whole Hindu race. His innovations might also be ascribed to the same motive.
11. Twenty miles from Saharanpur, now in Muzaffarnagar district.
12. Spelt Sarangpur by Khafi Khan.
13. 17 Miles from Saharanpur.

14. Vol. LX. The date of the battle according to the diary was July 11, 1710 A.D. (See *Banda Bahadur*).
15. *Banda Bahadur*.
16. Khafi Khan says Banda went to Sultanpore after this.
17. *Risala-i-Nanak Shah*.
18. He simply wrote alarming letters to the King who was away fighting the Rajputs.
19. Iradat Khan, as quoted by Latif.
20. Gyan Singh, the author of *Panith Prakash*, laments the laziness of the Sikhs in not attacking Delhi which seemed at this time to be an easy prey.
21. Sent by Asad Khan from Delhi and by various *Waga Nawises* e.g. Taj Dn Diwan Buotat, Hafiz Khan Diwan, Hasan Riza Kotwal, Fakhar-ud-Din Baksni, Muhammad Tahir and Darwesh Muhammad Qazi *Tarkhi Muhammad Shahi*.
22. Thousands who had suffered at the hands of Banda waited upon the king at Ajmer telling their piteous tales. "If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Dekhan which he did in 1710 there is reason to think the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these merciless invaders." - Malcolm.
23. According to Khafi Khan, Muhammad Amin Khan and Rustamdil Khan assisted by Churamani Jat.
24. Muhammad Qasim - *Ibrat Nama and Tarikh-i-Farrukh Siyar*.
25. In "Banda Bahadur," published by Chief Khalsa Diwan, Banda is represented as having taken no part personally in any of the battles fought after the fall of sarhind. The reasons given for this view are, however, far from convincing in face of overwhelming evidence of contemporary writers confirming his presence in some battles. It does not, moreover, seem probable that Banda would sit enjoying himself in the fort of Lohgarh complacently watching the loss of Karnal. On the other hand it seems very unlikely that Banda should have been beaten by such men as Maiabat Khan or Feroz Khan at Amingarh or by Shams Khan at Rahon. It seems more resonable to suppose that the Sikhs were taken by surprise and beaten at both places before Banda could arrive in time. They did not anticipate that the Emperor would return so hastily as he did. They despised the local officers as none had dared to stand in their way. They were, therefore, scattered all over the Punjab up to the Ravi and the hills and fighting in detachments were beaten by the imperialists.
26. The Sikh name of Mukhlispore. Iradat Khan, followed by Latif and some others, calls it the fort of aber. In Maasir-al-Umara (p. 515 Vol. II, it is called Lohgarh.)
26. There is not trace of the fort now but its site is still marked by a mound on the hill surrounded by two mountain streams. The only other relic is a small pond on the top of the mound which is perhaps a remnant of the tank which formed the water supply of the garrison. - *Banda Bahadur*.
27. Following, in this, the example of Aurangzeb who towards the end of his reign appeared at the siege of every fort belonging to the Kafirs, in order to win merit in a religious war - Iradat Khan.
28. He seems to have been indeed as great an expert in this art as Sivaji himself and perhaps greater inasmuch as he was regarded by his followers as well as enemies a sorcerer who could fly into the air at will. Therefore when he was finally captured, he was tied to a Moghul nobleman and confined in an iron cage in which he was carried to Delhi.
29. It is a free translation of Iradat Khan given in Latif's history.
30. When he was taken prisoner, the Emperor admired his devotion but did not spare his life. - Khafi Khan.

31. The only other instances of such heroic devotion are furnished by the history of the Rajpus. A nurse saved Rana Oodeay Singh's life by making over her own son to the assassins and the Sardar of Jhalawar saved the life of Pratap by personating the Prince in the battle of Haldighat. See Todd's *Annals of Rajasthan*.
32. Although soon restored to favour, his grief had shattered his health and he died in the spring of 1711 A. D. *Tarikh-i-Mohamad Shahi*.
33. This battle was fought near Bahrapur (Gurdaspur District) in the spring of 1711, three of four months after the siege of Lohgarh. According to *Sair-ul-Mutakhireen* Bayazid was Governor of Sarhind and was killed by a Sikh while praying in his own tent. (page 402).
34. He ordered all the dogs and donkeys of Lahore to be killed, and all Sadhoos and Faqirs to be expelled.
35. According to the *Sair*, Abdul Samad was Governor of Kashmir when he received orders to undertake the expedition. The order was accompanied by a *Sanad* appointing his son, Zakaria, Governor of Lahore. (p. 402)
36. In the Gurdaspur district. Akbar was crowned Emperor in this town.
37. He was assisted by the Hakims of Eminabad, Pasrur, Patti, Kalanaur, and Raja Bheem Singh Katoch and Dhruva. Deva of Jallota. *Ibrat Nama (Mohamad Kasim)*, f. 51.
38. Cunningham says this fort was built by Sikhs during the civil war between Farrukhsiyar and Jahandar Shah in 1712-13. Forster and Malcolm erroneously called this fort "Lohgarh" confounding it with Mukhlispore which is called Lohgarh in *Sair-ul-Mutakhireen*. "Banda Bahadur," however, makes no mention of this fort unless it be identical with the "Haveli" of Bhai Duni Chand in which Banda is said to have taken shelter and from which he is said to have been captured. It is stated that Banda tried to build a fort at Kot Mirza Jan but the Mughul army came upon him before it was half completed. This seems to be the correct view as it is confirmed by Muhammad Qasim. See his *Ibrat Nama* f. 51.
39. Budh Singh's *Risala-i-Nanak Shah* states that, when pressed hard, Banda with his followers sallied forth from the fort, sword in hand, and was taken prisoner fighting. Banda's army, according to Qasim, was 10,000 out of which, according to Khafi Khan, 8,000 had died of hunger. The ox-eating theory must be ascribed to the bigotry of Khafi Khan. On the other hand, if it be based on facts it does not mean that Banda himself or any of his Hindu or Sikh followers used the forbidden flesh. There must have been hundreds of scavengers and other low class camp followers in the fortress and Banda might have connived at their slaughter of some oxen to stage off the death by starvation.
40. Cunningham based on the *Sair*, p. 403.
41. The point is mentioned by McGregor. The Russian rebel Pugat Cheff was also put in an iron cage when arrested in 1774.
42. Wheeler's *Early Records of British India*, 180 gives 780 as the number of captives.
43. Latif.
44. Lafif, Malcolm, Cunningham, Khafi Khan, *Sair*, etc. Some of the East India Company's agents were at that time in Delhi and witnessed the whole thing with their own eyes. See Wheeler's *Early Records of British India*, page 180.
45. Latif, According to some his son was murdered and his flesh thrown into Banda's face.
46. Batches of Sikhs despatched by Banda had ransacked the whole country up to the Garden of Shalamar at Lahore. Khafi Khan.

The Sikhs under Banda Singh Bahadur

Teja Singh Ganda Singh*

1. Events leading up to Sarhind : After the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and the last Guru, the political leadership of the Sikhs came into the hands of Banda Singh, whom the Guru had converted to his faith and baptised as a regular Sikh. The Guru had sent him to the Panjab to continue the struggle with the Mughal rulers. He had given him a drum and a banner as emblems of temporal authority, and had bestowed on him five arrows from his own quiver as a pledge of victory. At parting he had enjoined on him to remain pure in conduct and never to touch another man's wife; to be true in word and deed; to look upon himself as a servant of the Khalsā who would be the Guru in future; and to act always upon the advice of the five Sikhs sent along with him.

Thus raised to the position of the commander of the Khalsa, Banda proceeded to the north, and from the neighbourhood of Sehri and Khanda, in the Pargana of Kharkhauda, he despatched the *hukamnāms* of Guru Gobind Singh to the leading Sikhs in the Panjab, calling upon them to join him. The Sikhs flocked to his banner from all quarters. Bhai Fateh Singh, a descendant of Bhai Bhagtu, Karam Singh and Dharam Singh of Bhai Rupa, and Nagahia Singh and Chuhar Singh were among the first who joined him with men and

* A Short History of the Sikhs, Bombay. 1950.

money. Ali Singh and Mali Singh, with other Sikhs of Salaudi, were the next to follow. Chaudhris Ram Singh and Tilok Singh, of the Phulkian family, liberally contributed to his resources, and in a few months the whole Sikh community was up in arms to wreak their vengeance upon Sarhind.

Banda Singh marched in the direction of Sarhind, plundering and destroying the important Muslim places on his way. On 26th November, 1709, early in the morning, he suddenly fell upon Samana, the native-place of Jalal-ud-Din, who had been employed to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur. Before nightfall the palatial buildings of the city were a heap of ruins. About 10,000 Mohammedans are said to have lost their lives, and an immense booty fell into the hands of the Sikhs.¹ Passing through Ghuram, Thaska, Shahabad and Mustafabad, which fell before Banda Singh without much resistance, he attacked the town of Kapuri. Its commander, Qadam-ud-Din, was notorious for his lustful campaigns, stories of which are still current after the lapse of over to centuries. Banda Singh was determined to chastise the depraved ruler. He attacked Kapuri, and setting fire to the strongholds of Qadam-ud-Din's debaucheries scattered his wealth to the four winds.

He next turned this attention to Sadhaura, which was another centre of oppression. The Hindus of this place complained to him that they were not allowed to cremate their dead or to perform any other religious ceremony. Cows were slaughtered before their houses, and their blood and entrails were left in the streets. Many Hindus were compelled to leave the town in disgust. The name of the Usman Khan, the ruler of the place, stunk in the nostrils of the Sikhs, because he had tortured to death the great Muslim saint, Sayed Badrud Din Shah, popularly known as Budhu Shah, simply for his having helped Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani. The Sikh marched upon Sadhaura, and the agrieved peasantry who were waiting for a chance to rise swelled the numbers of the invaders and rushed into the town. The angry mob got out of hand, and set fire to the mausoleum of Qutbul Aqtab, by which the Hindu inhabitants were forced to carry their dead, and put to the sword all those who had taken shelter

in the mansion of Sayed Budhu Shah. The place since then is called the Qatalgarhi or slaughter-house.² After the fall of Sadhaura the Sikhs took possession of the neighbouring fort of Mukhlisgarh.

Banda Singh was following an easterly circuitous route, in order to give time to the Sikhs of the Doaba and the Majha to cut their way through the opposition of the Malerkotla Afghans who were blocking the passage of the Satluj, and to join him before he attacked Sarhind.

2. *Conquest of Sarhind* : Sarhind represented everything that was abominable to the Sikhs. It was here that the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh had been done to death by the orders of Wazir Khan. It was this man who had been harrassing the Gru at Anandpur, had attacked him at Chamkaur, where his elder sons were killed, and had pursued him to Muktsar, where the forty Saved Ones met their death. Again it was this Wazir Khan whose emissaries had assassinated the Guru himself at Nader. The Sikhs were burning with rage to wreak their vengeance on the hateful ruler of this wretched city, which was then called *Gurū-ki-māri*, or the accursed one. It was looked upon as a sacred duty to take part in the coming crusade.

There were three classes of men who joined Banda Singh in this campaign. Firstly there were those who had belonged to the school of Guru Gobind Singh, and now rallied round his military successor in a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice to carry on the struggle against the enemies of their country and religion. There were others who had been sent by such leaders as Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phul family who could not personally join the expedition but sympathised with the cause and desired to render every possible help for its success. The third class was composed of irregulars who had been attracted by the prospect of plunder and private revenge. It was mostly this kind of people who were responsible for indiscriminate murder and loot. In all there are said to have been about forty thousand men assembled on the occasion, though this estimate of Khafi Khan appears to be very much exaggerated. Banda had no artillery, no elephants, and not even a

sufficient number of horses for all his men. Wazir Khan came out with all his resources to meet the advancing Sikhs. He had with him not only his own forces, but also those of Hissar and its neighbourhood in the south, and of Lahore, Eminabad, etc., in the north. The whole army must have been over twenty thousand.³ They had a number of field-guns, zamburaks and a long line of elephants.

The battle was fought on the plain of Chappar-chiri on 12th May, 1710. In the first shock of battle the booty-loving irregulars in the ranks of Banda took to their heels. They were followed by a thousand men who had been smuggled in⁴ by a nephew of Sucha Nand, the notorious Hindu Diwan of Sarhind. To stem the tide of desertion Banda Singh himself rushed to the front of his army and boldly led them on to the attack. "The Sikhs," says the autor of the *Ahwāl-i-Salātīn-i-Hind*, "came face to face with the Mohammedans, rapidly discharged their muskets, and reduced the battle to a hand-to-hand fight. The commander of the Mohammedans [Wazir Khan] and some of his men fought so bravely that heaps of the bodies of the infidels [Sikhs] fell to the ground, piled one upon another, and there was din on all sides like that of Doomsday. At last the whole Mohammedan army was destroyed. Wazir Khan then came face to face with Baj Singh, shouting 'be careful, you dirty dog', and rushed upon him with a lance. Baj Singh snatched the weapon from Wazir Khan and struck it on the head of his horse and wounded it. After a while, Wazir Khan pulled out an arrow from his quiver and thrust it at the arm of Baj Singh. Then drawing his sword he sprang forward to make an end of him. Fateh Singh, who was standing nearby, took out his sword and struck Wazir Khan with it so strongly that it passed through his shoulder down to his waist and his head fell to the ground."⁵ Confusion spread in the Mohammedan ranks, and the Skhs fiercely fell upon them. "Not a man of the army of Islam," says Khafi Khan, "escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in. Horsemen and footmen fell under the swords of the infidels [Sikhs], who pursued them as far as Sarhind."⁶

Sarhind itself, which was about ten miles from the scene of

battle, was taken two days later after a short but sharp struggle, in which five hundred Sikhs lost their lives. The city was ransacked, and only those Mohammedans who had either fled away or had hidden themselves in disguise in the houses of Hindus escaped injury. Some Hindus too, like Sucha Nand⁷, who had made themselves particularly obnoxious to the Sikhs for their complicity in the crimes of Wazir Khan came in for their share in the punishment. The booty that fell into the hands of the Sikhs is estimate at two crores, in money and goods, belonging to Wazir Khan, and some lakhs found in the deserted houses of Sucha Nand and others.⁸

‘The *Siyarul Mutaakhirin* [as well as the *Muntakhabul Lubāb*] contains terrible details of atrocious’ deeds of the Sikhs,’ writes Thornton’, ‘but a Mohammedan writer is not to be implicitly trusted upon such a point.’⁹ Very fruitful imagination seems to have been at work in ascribing every kind of cruelty to the sikhs. they are said to have desecrated mosques and ‘torn open the wombs of pregnant woemn, dashing every living child upon the ground.’¹⁰ such statements are blindly repeated by later writers like Mohammed Latif. ‘The Mausoleum of Ahmed Shah [Sheikh Ahmed Mujadded Alif Sani], the most magnificent of such buildings’. says Narang, ‘still stands as it did before the battle, and is, I think. sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif’s statement.’¹¹ There is no particular instance given of any such outrage. Only the Sikh chronicles mention the digging up of the grave – and that too for the performance of the last rites – of Bibi Anup Kaur, a Sikh women, who had been carried away by Sher Mohammed Khan¹² and buried in a grave at Malerkotla, after she had committed suicide to save her honour.

The city was spared complete destruction at the intervention of local Hindus who appealed to Banda Singh for mercy. Amnesty was granted to the inhabitants on their paying a large ransom. The curse, however, is still attached to the city, and even now a pious Sikh, when travelling to the north or south of Sarhind, may be seen pulling out a brick or two from its ruins and conveying them to the waters of the Satluj or the Jamuna

Baj Singh, a companion and counsellor of Banda, was appointed governor of Sarhind, with Ali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. Fateh Singh, of the Bhai-ke family, was given charge of Samana, and Ram Singh, brother of Baj Singh, that of Thanesar, jointly with Baba Binod Singh. The imperial deputies, incharge of the various parganas of Sarhind were so terrified that they submitted to the authority of Banda Singh, without striking a blow, and thus the entire province of Sarhind, extending from Karnal to Ludhiana and yielding a revenue of about thirty-six lakhs a year, came into the hands of the Sikhs.

Strange conversions were noticed as a result of Banda Singh's overbearing influence. 'The authority of that deluded sect [of the Sikhs] has reached such extremes', wrote Aminud Daula in June 1710, 'that many Hindus and Mohammedans, finding no alternative to obedience and submission, adopted their faith and ritual. Their chief [Banda Singh] captivated the hearts of all towards his inclinations and, whether a Hindu or a Mohammedan, whoever came in contact with him, was addressed as a *Singh*. Accordingly Dindar Khan, a powerful ruler of the neighbourhood, was named Dindar Singh, and Mir Nasirud Din, the official reporter of Sarhind, became Mir Nasir Singh. In the same way, a large number of Mohammedans abandoned Islam and followed the misguided path [of Sikhism] and took solemn oaths and firm pledges to stand by Barida.'¹³

Banda fixed upon Mukhlispur, a pleasant hilly place near Sadhaura, as his headquarters, and repairing its old neglected fort, renamed it Lohgarh, or Iron Castle. He assumed royal authority, and struck coins in the name of the Guru. They bore the following inscription on one side:

Sikka zad bar har do alam Tegh-i-Nanak Wahib ast.

Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan Fazal-i-Sacha Sahib ast.

(By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds : The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons, and the victory is of Guru Gbind Singh the king of kings.)

The reverse had the following words in praise of his newly-founded capital :

*Zarb ba amaan dehar musavarat sahar
zinat-ul-takhat mubarak vakht.*

(Struck in the City of Peace, allustrating the beauty of civic life, and the ornament of the blessed throne).

He also introduced an official seal for his state documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to his master :

*Deg o Togh o Fateh O Nusrat be dirang.
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.*

(The Kettle and the Sword (symbols of Charity and Power), Victory and ready Patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak-Gobind Singh.)

He started his own regnal year from the date of his conquest of Sarhind. He had no time to organise any regular system of administration. One measure, however, was very conspicuous, and has had great influence on the future fiscal history of the Panjab. It was the abolition of the Zemindari system prevailing in the country. The Zemindars or landlords, who had been mostly government officials responsible for payment of fixed land revenue of the villages entrusted to them, had come to arrogate to themselves the position of absolute proprietors who could turn out the actual cultivators at their sweet will. The authorities did not interfere in their internal arrangements so long as they paid their contributions regularly. They were free to exact any amounts from the peasants who were practically reduced to the position of slaves. 'The affairs were mismanaged in all the provinces,' says the author of the *Sāhibul Akhbār*, 'and no control was maintained over the government officials or the Zemindars. All classes of government officers were addicted to extortion and corruption, and the whole system of regularity and order was subverted.' Once, says a local tradition, people from the neighbourhood of Sadhaura came to Banda complaining of the iniquities practised by their landlords. He ordered

Baj Singh to open fire on them. They were astonished at the strange reply to their representation, and asked him what it meant. He told them that they deserved no better treatment when being thousands in number they still allowed themselves to be cowed down by a handful of Zemindars. Why should not the Khalsa of the Guru feel strong enough to redress his own wrongs? The remedy suggested was successfully applied, and the landlords were ejected. The example was followed in other parts of the country. The result was that the tillers of the soil became masters, and in the course of time the curse of the Zemindari system, which is still hanging over many parts of northern India, was lifted from the Panjab, which is now considered as the heaven of peasant proprietors.

With the success attending their arms and the confidence they inspired in the minds of the non-Muslim people, who came to look upon them as the defenders of their faith and country, the Sikhs were fired with a new zeal. They must root out the Mughal rule from the sacred soil of ancient Hind. Every complaint from the oppressed people excited them against the government officials and aristocrats. They started on a career of conquest, and every method, including loot and sabotage, which would cripple the resources of the enemy, was considered justified.

Every Sikh, of whatever station in life, felt to have been providentially raised above everyone of his fellow-subjects and destined to be a ruler. 'In all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs,' says Irvine. 'the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru [meaning Banda], when in a short time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders..... Not a soul dared to disobey an order, and men who had often risked themselves in battle-fields, became so cowed down that they were afraid even

to remonstrate. Hindus who had not joined the sect were not exempt from these.¹⁴

3. *Invasion of the Gangetic Doab* : The victory at Sarhind was a signal for a general rising of the Sikhs all over the country. We shall take up first the spearhead of the movement led by Banda himself. The trouble arose in the pargana of Deoband over a few conversions to Sikhism. The converts belonging to the village of Unarsa complained to Banda that they were being imprisoned and persecuted by Jalal Khan, the Faujdar of that area. Banda led his warrior across the Jamuna and marched on Saharanpore on the way to Jalalabad. Ali Hamid Khan, the Faujdar of Saharanpore, fled to Delhi, but the people led by officers put the place in a state of defence and received the Sikhs with showers of arrows and bullets. The Sikhs proved more than a match for them, and reduced the place at once. With the fall of the city half of the *sarkar* of Saharanpore came into the possession of the Sikhs.¹⁵ A detachment was sent to chastise the Peerzadas of Behat (17 miles to the north of Saharnpore), who were notorious for their anti-Hindu activities, especially for slaughtering cows in public. The town was sacked and the Peerzadas were killed to a man.¹⁶

The whole force then prepared itself to march towards Jalalabad, which lay about thirty miles to the south. Banda Singh addressed a letter to Jalal Khan, the founder and faujdar of the place, to release forthwith all the Sikhs taken prisoner from Unarsa and to submit to the authority of the Khalsa. A typical Afghan as he was, he refused to give in, and to make matters worse he mounted the Sikh messengers on asses, and parading them through the streets of Jalalabad turned them out of the town.¹⁷ This added fresh fuel to the fire, and the Sikhs rushed towards Jalalabad with all haste. On their way they replenished their resources with rich booty obtained from Ambehta. On 21st July 1710, they reached Nanauta, where a determined resistance was offered to them by the local Sheikzadas, but it was all in vain. The Sikhs were reinforced by the Gujjars who had long suffered at the hands of the Sheikhzadas and who now declared themselves to be *Nanakprast* or followers of Guru Nanak.

A sanguinary battle was fought in the streets of the town, and according to the Diary of Mohammed Zafarud Din, a contemporary writer, three hundred of the Shiekhzadas fell dead in the courtyard of Siekh Mohammed Afzal alone. Nanauta was razed to the ground. It has since then been called the *Phütā Shahr* or the Ruined Town.¹⁸

Jalalabad was besieged next. After a couple of suburban villages had been reduced, the heavy rainfall and the inundation of the river Krishna made it extremely difficult for the Sikhs to continue the siege. They retired to the Jullundur Doab, where their presence was more urgently needed. But the campaign had shaken the whole countryside up to the walls of Delhi. The reports of the Sikh incursions into Sarhind and the Gangetic Doab alarmed the Emperor who was then in Rajputana after his return from the Deccan, and he moved his forces northwards for the suppression of the Sikhs.

4. Occupation of the Jullundur Doab : The Sikhs, after Sarhind, felt everywhere that the day of their deliverance had arrived. The nearest territory to feel the stir was that of the Jullundur Doab, where the Sikhs rose as one man to throw off the yoke of the Mughals. They began by ousting a number of petty officials and replacing them with Sikhs. They addressed a letter, in the form of a *parwana*, to Shamas Khan, the Faujdar of Jullundur, calling upon him to effect certain reforms and to hand over his treasure personally to the Khalsa. After a show of submission, the Faujdar came out to give a fight. He appealed to the Muslims in the name of religion, and declared *jehad* against the Sikhs. According to Khafi Khan, more than a hundred thousand crusaders, mostly weavers, were collected, and they marched out from Sultanpur with great display. In addition to these Shamas Khan was able to muster about five thousand horse and thirty thousand foot.¹⁹ The Sikhs, according to Khafi Khan, had seventy to eighty thousand horse and foot (the number seems to be exaggerated). They sent an urgent message to Banda, who was busy in the Gangetic Doab, to hurry to the Panjab.

Seeing the larger forces of the enemy, the Sikhs retired to Rāhon, which is about seven miles from Sultanpur. Here they were besieged for several days, but finding that they were fighting against

odds, they slipped away under the cover of the darkness from their enrenchments. This was, however, only a ruse. Seeing next morning that Shamas Khan had gone away to Sultanpur, his capital, leaving a small force in the fort of Rāhon, they rushed upon the fort and drove out the garrison. This happened on 12th October, 1710.²⁰

Jullundur and Hoshiarpur were occupied without a blow, and in a short time the whole Doab passed into the hands of the Sikhs.

5. *Haidri Flag Crusade*²¹ : The tracts of Majha and Riarki, forming the central Panjab, were delivered at the same time. Here too the Sikh rising was so general that the local officials, not feeling equal to the task, had to resort to a religious crusade against the insurgents. 'The entire Khalsa from the Majha and other areas, numbering about eight thousand, assembled at Amritsar, and having conferred together overran the territories of the Panjab.'²² Leaving the strong parganas of Lahore and Qasur for the present, they turned their attention to Batala and Kalanaur first, and turning out the government officials established their own *thānās* and *tehsils*. Some of the Sikh leaders, particularly those of Sathiala and Butala, moved on further north and occupied the pargana of Pathankot.²³

The main body of the Sikhs carried their arms to the very walls of Lahore. Sayyed Aslam Khan, the Governor of Lahore, was seized with terror and dared not move out to meet them. The Mullas, therefore, took up the lead. They raised a green banner, called the Haidri-Flag, and proclaimed a *jehād* or crusade against the Sikhs. So fervent as the appeal made to the Muslim sentiments that many wealthy traders and high-placed men sold off their belongings and made large contributions to the funds of the expedition. Some Hindu officials too joined them. The Sikhs had stationed themselves in the fort of Bhagwant Rai at the village named Bharat near Lahore. After suffering a close siege, in which they put up a bold defence, they sallied forth one night and broke through the enemy's lines. Sadly disappointed at this discomfiture, the *Ghazis* returned to Lahore and in chagrin insulated the Hindus of the city and threatened their own rulers. Another force sent out against the Sikhs, lying near Kotla Begum, met the same fate. The final battle of this campaign was

fought at Bhīlowāl, where the Sikhs fell upon the unsuspecting Ghazis returning to Lahore, and inflicted a heavy defeat on them. By this the whole territory of Majha and Riarki became a Sikh possession.

6. ***Clash with Royal Forces*** : The Sikhs were now masters of the Panjab east of Lahore. According to Iradat Khan, 'there was no nobleman daring enough to march from Delhi against them.' 'If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Deccan, which he did in 1710, there is every reason to think,' says Malcolm, 'the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these..... invaders.'²⁴

On receipt of the news of the Sikh disturbances in the Punjab, the Emperor left Ajmer on 27th June 1710 and moved towards the north. He called upon the Subedars of Delhi and Oudh, the Faujdars and Nazims of Moradabad and Allahabad, and the Sayyeds of Barha towards the Panjab. He had Sikhs so much on his brain that he looked at every bearded man with suspicion. On 8th September he issued an order that 'all Hindus employed in the Imperial offices should get their beards shaved', because he feared that there might be Sikhs disguised among them. The tales brought to him about Banda Singh were still more disturbing. It was said that the Sikh leader was possessed of supernatural powers, that flames issued from his mouth, and that weapons could have no effect upon him or his followers.²⁵

He moved a mammoth army against the Sikhs, who retired from Thanesar and Sarhind and took their stand at the fort of Lohgarh. The imperial forces reached its neighbourhood on 4th December, and were encamped at Sadhaura, when the Sikhs fell upon them with showers of arrows and musket-balls. 'It is impossible for me,' says Khafi Khan, 'to describe the fight which followed. The Sikhs in their fakir's dress struck terror into the royal troops. The number of the dead and dying of the Imperialists was so large that for a time it appeared as if they were going to lose.' The Imperial troops were, however, soon reinforced, and the setting sun saw the Sikhs retreating towards the fort of Lohgarh.²⁶

This hilly retreat of Banda Singh's forces was closely invested by over sixty thousand horse and foot, including some from Rajput princes such as the Bundelas. But the place was so well fortified

that the Emperor dared not attack it for some time. The Sikhs inside, however, were short of provisions and had no hope of standing a long siege. They are said to have eaten their horses and other beasts to satisfy their hunger, In despair they decided to rush out and cut their way through the enemy's ranks. One Gulab Singh, paymaster of the Sikh forces, 'offered to sacrifice his life for the good of his religion,' and dressing himself in the garments of Banda Singh seated himself in his place. Banda Singh made a determined sally on the night of 10th December, and disappeared with all his men into the hills of Nahan.²⁷

The place was taken next morning by the Mughal commander, Munim Khan, but to his disappointment 'the hawk had flown', leaving only a substitute, in the person of Gulab Singh, and a few dead and dying. The Emperor's displeasure knew no bounds. He ordered one of his nobles, Hamid Khan, to pursue the escaped chief into the hills, and to bring him alive if possible; if not, then the *Barfi Raja* (Ice King) of Nahan was to be hauled up. As Banda Singh had escaped beyond the reach of his pursers, Raja Bhup Prakash of Nahan was made prisoner, and was carried, along with Gulab Singh, in an iron cage to Delhi.

7. ***Banda in the Hills*** : Within a fortnight of his escape, Banda issued circular letters, called *Hukamnāmās*, to the Sikhs of various places, calling upon them to join him at once.

In response to this call, Sikhs from all directions flocked to him at Kiratpur, and he was able to lead an expedition against some of the Hindu chiefs who had been troubling the last Guru.²⁸ Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur was the first to attract his attention. As usual he was called upon by a *parwānā* to submit. The old fire still burned in him, and he chose to offer resistance. His capital, Bilaspur, was stormed and his forces decimated. The other rajas seeing this had no stomach to fight, and they came in readily to submit. Raja Sidh Sain of Mandi declared himself to be a follower of Guru Nanak, and helped Banda Singh in his difficulties with the Raja of Kulu. Raja Udey Singh of Chamba allied himself with the Sikh leader and gave

him in marriage a handsome girl from his own family. A son, named Ajai Singh, was born of this union.

For some time Banda Singh made the northern hills his home, and would come down only occasionally to extend his influence in the plains. On 4th June 1711, a battle was fought near Bahrāmpur, where the Faujdar of Jammu was defeated and the town of Raipur and Bahrampur were overrun by the Sikhs. Kalanaur and Batala were the next to fall. But the occupation of these places was only temporary, as Banda Singh was pursued by the Imperial generals, Mohammed Amin Khan and Rustamdil Khan, and he had again and again to retire towards Jammu. The Sikhs could not be caught, but many persons were 'seized on the wrongful accusation of being Sikhs', and were given over to the Mughal soldiers in lieu of pay. They were sold in the horse-market (*nakhās*) at Lahore.²⁹ The Sikhs and their supporters in the central districts were also subjected to indignities and harrassments. An Imperial orders was issued enjoining upon government officials to kill Sikhs wherever found.³⁰ The result was an indiscriminate persecution and slaughter of Sikhs and their sympathisers. In order that Hindus might not suffer with them, the Emperor republished his royal firman,³¹ ordering all Hindus to shave off their beards, and thus to distinguish themselves from the Sikhs who, according to, *Siyarul Mutankhirin*, would never - not even under pain of death - 'cut or shave their beards or whiskers or any hair whatever of their bodies.' In fact, Emperor Bahadur Shah seems to have gone off his head towards the end of his life. Once he took it into his head to order the killing of dogs and donkeys and the expulsion of beggars and fakirs from the camp and the city.³² He held his last durbar on February 15, 1712, and died on the night of Monday, February 18.

Bahadur Shah was succeeded by his effeminate son, Jahandar Shah, who was soon ousted by Farrukh Siyar, son of Azimush Shan, in the beginning of 1713.

The period of internicine struggle offered a favourable opportunity to Banda Singh to re-establish his power and recapture the lost territories. He shot across the Punjab with the speed of a

meteor, and took Sadhaura and Lohgarh, which once again became the capital of the Sikh power. Farrukh Siyar appointed Abdus Samad Khan as Governor of Lahore and his son, Zakria Khan as Faujdar of Jammu, with orders to expel Banda Singh from his positions. The Sikhs were obliged to evacuate Sadhaura and Lohgarh in October 1713, and Banda took refuge in the Jammu hills. Abdus Samad Khan and his son received honours from the Emperor on their initial victories over the Sikhs, who began again to be hunted down everywhere, especially by the Pathans of the Gurdaspur region.

8. *Last stand at Gurdas-Nangal* : In the beginning of 1715 Banda Singh reappeared in the plains. He marched towards Kalanaur and Batala, which he took after some hard fighting, and placed them in the hands of Sikh officials. This roused the ire of Farrukh Siyar who sharply rebuked Abdus Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore, for his negligence. Orders were issued to a number of Mughal and Hindu officials and chiefs to proceed with their troops to reinforce the armies of Lahore. These were further supported by the Katauch Raja of Kangra and Har Dev, son of Raja Dhruv Dev of Jasrota. Before Banda could dig in at Samad Khan were to him. he however, stood his ground very well to the amazement of all, and in the first encounter fought so heroically that, according to *Siyarul Mutaakhirin*, he was very near giving a complete defeat to the Imperial general.' But in the absence of a strong position for defence he was obliged to retreat and was brought to bay at the village of Gurdas-Nangal,' about four miles to the west of Gurdaspur. He put his men in the *ihata* or enclosure of Bhai Duni Chand, and threw up improvised defences around it. A moat was dug and filled with water from a neighbouring canal, and an artificial quagmire was created about it to keep off the enemy. Here the Sikhs sat down to stand the siege, which became so close that, 'not a blade of grass, or a grain of corn, could find its way in'. Mohammad Qasim, the author of the *Ibratnama*, who was an eye-witness of these operations, writes : 'The brave and daring deeds of the infernal Sikhs were amazing. Twice or thrice a day, some forty or fifty of these blackguards would come out of their enclosure to gather grass for their animals, and

when the combined forces of the Imperialists went to oppose them, they made an end of the Mughal with arrows, muskets and small swords and disappeared. Such was the terror of these people and the fear of the sorceries of their chief that the commanders of the royal army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek his safety in flight from the *garhi*.³³

The besiegers could do nothing but to draw the siege closer, so as to starve out the Sikhs. The provisions were soon exhausted, and the besieged began to suffer extremes of hunger. In the absence of grain, flesh of horse, asses and other animals was used as food. 'Also as the Sikhs were not strict observers of caste,' says Irvine on the authority of Khafi Khan, 'they slaughtered oxen and other animal, and not having any firewood ate the flesh raw. Many died of dysentery and privation. When all the grass was gone, they gathered leaves from trees. When these were consumed, they stripped the bark and broke off the small shoots, dried them, ground them down, and used them instead of flour, thus keeping body and soul together. They also collected the bones of animals and used them in the same way. Some assert that they saw a few of the Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs, roast it, and eat it.'³⁴ 'In spite of all this,' says Kamwar Khan, 'the infernal Sikh chief and his men withstood all the military force that the great Mughal Empire could muster against them for eight long months.'³⁵ But how long could this continue? About eight thousand had died, and the remaining were reduced to mere skeletons. No resistance, in such conditions, was possible. The *garhi* was entered by the Imperialists on December 7, 1715, and Banda Singh and his famished followers were taken prisoners. Some two or three hundred of them were bound hand-and-foot and made over to the Mughal and Tartar soldiery, who 'put them to the sword and filled that extensive plain with blood as if it had been a dish.' The dead bodies of the Sikhs were ripped open in search of gold coins, which were supposed to have been swallowed by them, and their heads were stuffed with hay and mounted on spears.³⁶

9. **Executions at Delhi :** From Gurdas-Nangal Abdus Samad Khan took Banda Singh and his companions to Lahore,³⁷

where they were ignominiously paraded in the streets, and then despatched to Delhi. Although Banda Singh was a prisoner, living at the mercy of his captors, yet great was the Singh dread of his occult powers, that it was feared that he might fly away their hands. He was bound in chains in four places and kept in a cage. A Mughal officer was tied to him on the same elephant with orders to plunge his dagger into him if he tried to escape. His companions, about 200 in all, were also in chains. Zakria Khan, Abdus Samad Khan's son, who was in charge of the show, thought that the number of prisoners was too small to be presented to the Emperor. So he roped³⁸ in a few thousand more from villages on the way, until the number of the prisoners amounted to 740, and that of the heads hoisted on spears to 2000. Besides these seven hundred cart loads of heads also accompanied the gruesome show !

The whole concourse moved slowly toward Delhi, where it reached on February 29, 1716. Banda Singh and the other Sikh prisoners were conducted in a procession through the main streets of the Imperial capital. The ceremonial followed was the same as observed in the case of Sambhaji, the son of Shivaji Maratha. At the head of the procession were carried two thousand heads of Sikhs, raised on bamboo poles, their long hair streaming to the wind. Along with them, the body of a cat was hung at the end of a pole, to show that every living creature, even down to the quadrupeds like cats, found in the enclosure of Gurdas-Nanagal, had been destroyed. Then came Banda Singh, seated in an iron cage placed on the back of an elephant, and dressed, out of mockery, in a gold-embroidered red turban and a heavy robe of scarlet brocade worked in with pomegranate flowers in gold. Behind him stood, clad in chain armour, with a drawn sword in hand, one of the Turani officers of Mohammad Amin Khan. After his elephant came the other Sikh prisoners, tied two on saddleless camels. On their heads were placed high fool's-caps of ridiculous shape, made of sheep-skin and adorned with glass-beads. One hand of each man was attached to his neck by two pieces of wood which were held together by iron pins.

The road from Agharabad to the Lahore gate of Delhi, a distance of several miles, was lined on both sides with troops and filled with jubilant crowds, who mocked at the grotesque appearance of the prisoners. Mirza Mohammed Harisi, the author of *Ibratnama*, who was present at Delhi during these scenes, which he describes as *tamasha*, writes, "Such a crowd in the bazars and lanes had rarely been seen. The Mussalmans could hardly contain themselves for joy. But the unfortunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to this conditions, were quite happy and contented with their lot. Not the slightest sign of dejection or humiliation was visible on their faces. In fact, most of them, as they passed along on their camels, seemed to be happy and cheeful, merrily singing their sacred hymns. If anyone from the lane called out to them that their own excesses had brought them where they were, they quickly retorted that it had been so decreed by the Almighty, and that their capture and misfortune was in accordance with His will. And if anyone said, 'Now you will be killed,' they shouted, 'Do kill us.' When were we afraid of death ? Had we been afraid, how could we have fought so many battles with you ? It was only through want and hunger that we fell into your hands; otherwise you know already what deeds of bravery we are capable of."³⁹

On the arrival of the procession at the Imperial fort, Banda Singh, Baj Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh and a few other leaders were made over to Ibrahimud Din Khan. *Mir Atish*, to be imprisoned at the Tripolia. Banda Singh's wife, his three-year old son, Ajai Singh, and the nurse of the child were taken and put into the harem. The remaining Sikhs were handed over to Sarbrah Khan Kotwal for execution.

The carnage began on 5th March, 1716, opposite the *Chabutra Kotwali*, in the space now attached to the Hardinge Library. One hundred Sikhs were executed every day. Life was promised to anyone who would renounce his faith and become Mohammedan, but 'to the last', say Surman and Stepheson, who were then in Delhi, 'it has not been found that one apostatised from this new formed religion.'⁴⁰ Among the condemned prisoners was a youth of tender age recently

married. His widowed mother tried to take advantage of the Emperor's offer, and represented that her son 'was not a Sikh but only a prisoner in the hands of Banda's men. Her entreaties moved the Emperor who ordered the release of the youth. The mother brought the order of reprieve to the Kotwal, who told the young boy that he was free. But the boy refused to be so released, saying, 'My mother is telling a lie. I am heart and soul a Sikh, a devoted followers of my Guru. Sent me quickly after my comrades.' He ran back to the place of execution, and was duly beheaded.⁴¹ "All observers, Indian and European," says Irvine, "unite in remarking on the wonderful patience and resolution with which these men underwent their fate. Their attachment and devotion to their leader were wonderful to behold. They had no fear of death; they called executioner *Mukt* or the Deliverer; they cried out to him joyfully, 'O Mukt ! kill me first !'" "But what is singular," says the author of *Siyarul Mutaakhirtin*, "these people not only behaved firmly during the execution, butt they would dispute and wrangle with each other for priority in death, and they made interest with the executioner to obtain the preference." For a whole week the work of butchery went on until all the prisoners were beheaded. At night their bodies were removed in carts and hung up on trees outside the city.⁴²

After this massacre there was a lull for three months, during which the lives of Banda Singh and his leading companions were spared, 'in hope to get an account of his treasure and of those that assisted him.'⁴³ Banda's turn came on June 9, 1716, when he was taken out in a procession, along with his twenty-six companions, through the streets of the old city to the shrine of Khawaja Qutab-ud- Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, near the Qutab Minar. Here he was paraded round the tomb of the late Emperor Bahadur Shah. He was then offered the usual choice between Islam and death. But the chosen disciple of Guru Gobind Singh', as the *Tarikh-i-Muzaffari* call him, preferred to die rather than abjure his faith. His baby son, Ajai Singh, was placed in his lap, and he was asked to kill him. He refused. The executioner then backed the child to pieces, dragging out his quivering heart, thrust it into the mouth of Banda, who stood unmoved like a

statue, completely resigned to the will of God.⁴⁴ According to the *Siyarul Mutaakhirin*, Mohammed Amin Khan, who was standing by, was so impressed by the noble bearing of Banda Singh that he was impelled to say, 'It is surprising that a man possessed of so much acuteness and nobility should have involved the world in so much misery and brought calamity upon himself !' Banda replied with greatest composure, 'Whenever corruption in men increases so as to outstep all bounds, then the Divine Avenger raise up a scourge like me to chastise the race so depraved; but afterwards. He grants power to men like you to punish him in return.'⁴⁵

The details of his execution are too horrible to relate. First of all he was deprived of his right eye, and then of his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off, flesh was torn with red-hot pincers, and finally his head was chopped off. Banda Singh remained calm and serene up to the last, 'glorying', says Elphinstone, "in having been raised up by God to be the scourge to the iniquities and oppressions of the age."⁴⁶ The remains of his body were removed, with permission, by some Sikh shopkeepers of Delhi, and were cremated near Barapula.⁴⁷

The other prisoners were executed the next day.

10. *The Man and his Achievements* : Perhaps no other man has earned so much hatred from Persian writers of the day as Banda Singh. It is true that the revolution which he led against the Mughal power had been started much earlier by the Sikh Gurus, but it was he who effectively organised and used it as a political force to pull down the Mughal edifice and to give a foretaste of independence to the people of the land. It is impossible to expect any calm appraisal of Banda Singh's character and the hands of those from whom he wrested power. The contemporary writers too could not be free from bias, as they were either official reporters or proteges of the Mughal rulers, and therefore their accounts, says Thornton, may 'not be implicitly trusted.'⁴⁸ They depict him 'as one of the most sanguinary of monsters, the man whose actions, had infidels been the sufferers and a Mussalman the actor, they might not perhaps have thought unworthy of applause.'⁴⁹

Judging him from a purely historical standpoint, he does not appear to have been such a monster. Even to his enemies he seemed to reflect so much acuteness and nobility in his features.⁵⁰ Indeed he resembled his master Guru Gobind Singh in his looks.⁵¹ He had the same thin wiry physique, the same medium stature, and the same light brown complexion, which later on, under the influence of a more bracing climate of the hilly north, took on a pink hue. Over them all was the same olympian air which cowed down the recalcitrant and cheered up those who were friendly. All writers bear witness to his coolness of courage and dauntless bravery against odds.

It shows how sagacious Guru Gobind Singh had been in choosing his political successor. From the day Banda received baptism of the Khalsa from the hands of his master to the last day of his life when he was torn to pieces, he remained a staunch believer in the Guru's mission. His coins and his seal bore the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh as the sources of his authority. He strictly followed the rules of Sikh conduct, called *Rahit*, never cutting his hair, or using tobacco, *halal* meat or a stranger woman. In spite of the temptations offered to him by way, his unchallenged position, and his enemies provocation and example, he remained pure and chaste.

His zeal for propagating religion was only equalled by his zeal for war. He converted a large number of Hindus and Muslims to the Sikh faith, but there is no evidence to show that he ever used force in doing so. Some people may have joined the Sikh fold just to ingratiate themselves with the conquering hero, or to save themselves from dire punishment, but they cannot be counted as cases of undue pressure. It appears from a report⁵² made to Emperor Bahadur Shah by an official newswriter that Banda, during his stay at Kalanaur in April 1711, had assured the Mohammedans that they would not be interfered with in any way, and that all those who came to join his ranks would be duly paid. They would enjoy full religious liberty, including that of saying *Namaz* and *Azan*. As a result of this five thousand Mohammedans enlisted themselves in his army, and the number so says another report⁵³ went on increasing daily.

There is no doubt about Banda's faithful adhesion to the doctrine of Guru Gobind Singh. But some recent Sikh writers, following Rattan Singh Bhangu, have laid undue emphasis on the differences between Banda and some of his companions. These differences really belong to the period after his death. In his lifetime there was hardly anything visible in his policy or behaviour that could be interpreted as schismatic. It is clear from his letters that he never arrogated to himself the title or position of a Guru. Rather he loved to be called *Banda* or the master's slave, and always asked the Sikhs to follow the injunctions of the Great Guru.⁵⁴ The Khalsa, as we have seen, instead of turning their back on the national hero, stood by him upto the last and sacrificed themselves with him at Delhi.

There is no doubt that all Sikhs were united under Banda Singh, and out of them he forged an instrument of justice for the poor and the downtrodden, and of severe chastisement for those who had been following the trade of oppression with impunity. He used to point out to his officials that 'according to the Holy Granth the best worship for a ruler is to be just... If you call yourselves Sikhs of the Great Man [Guru Gobind Singh], do not do anything that is sinful, irreligious or unjust. Advance the cause of true Sikhism, and smite those who behave in an un-Sikh manner.'⁵⁵ The measures adopted by him to execute justice and to punish the wrong-doers were often very severe, but those were very hard times, and nothing but such measures could have brought home to the irresponsible officials that wanton cruelty and oppression do not always pay.

The aim of Banda was nothing short of liberation of the country from the Mughal rule, which was still foreign in most of its essentials. It was as severe and unsympathetic as it had been in the days of Guru Nanak, who had described it as a rule of 'tigers' and 'hounds'. The whole Sikh movement had been for a national awakening, which first released the spirit of the people, and then stirring them to a political consciousness knit them together to resist tyranny and oppression. The Gurus had organised their followers as a revolutionary force to defend their rights, and had secured from the

Brahmin and the Mulla the freedom of food, the freedom of worship, the freedom of expression, and the freedom of missionary activity. The Sixth and the Tenth Gurus had taught them to fight in battle and to destroy the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism; but their objective being always defensive they had with stood the temptation of acquiring territory, making prisoners or wresting wealth from the enemy. Banda Singh was the first man among Sikhs to think of founding a political *raj*. He fought battles not to cripple the Mughal power, but to destroy it root and branch. He therefore ousted the government officials and supplanted them with his own. He abolished the Zemindari system and introduced peasant proprietorship, which up to this day is recognised as one of the best fiscal reforms. He won thundering victories, and made the people feel for the time being that a great genius had risen in the land to avenge the wrongs of centuries and to set up a new order of things.

But the task proved too great for him. The Mughal *raj* was deeply rooted in the soil, its power was not yet exhausted, and it was fortunate in having at the helm of affairs in the Panjab a strong man like Abdus Samad Khan who mustered all the available force of the country and held the Sikhs in check. Banda Singh, on his side, had no such resources. A dauntless spirit can do much, but it cannot do everything. It must be supplemented with men and material. But Banda Singh from the beginning was greatly handicapped in this respect. The movement he had started had, by its very successes, so terrified the upper classes that they dared not come out openly to help him. Only the poor classes of Sikhs joined him, and their number was not very large. The general masses of Hindus kept themselves aloof. Many of the ruling chiefs, like Chattar Sal, Banda Singh and Udet Singh Bundelas, Churaman Jat, Gopal Singh Bhadauria, Bachan Singh Kachhwaha and the Rajas of the Shivalik Hills took active part against him and allied themselves with the Mughals. All these causes combined to make the successes of Banda Singh transitory.

But all the successes gained by him were not on the battle-field. There was a revolution effected in the minds of people, of which History often fails to take note. A will was created in the

ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause. The example set by Banda and his companions in this respect was to serve them as a beacon-light in the darker days to come. The idea of a national state, long dead, once again became a living aspiration, and although suppressed for the time being by relentless persecution, it went on working underground like a smouldering fire, and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be expressed again.

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1. The *Phulkian States Gazetteer* (1904), p. 205; *Prāchi'n Panth Prakash*, p. 102-3.
2. Mohd. Harish's *Ibratnāmā*, p. 40b; *Prāchin Panth Prakahs*, p. 104; Karam Singh's *Bandā Bahādur*, p. 55-9. There is nothing on record, even in Muslim histories, to support the exaggerated statements of the *Shamsher Khālśa* and *Prāchin Panth Prakāsh* about the desecration of the tombs of Pirs, exhumation of the dead and their cremation. The fact is that the Mausoleums of Ganj-i-Ilm and Qutbul Aqtab stand uninjured to the present day; only the latter bears some marks of the fire set to it by the infuriated mob.
3. Khafī Khan, in his *Mantakhībul Lubāb*, II. 653, gives the strength of Wazir Khan's army is 15,000 men; but taking into account the reinforcements received by him, according to the *Akhār-i-Darbaār-i-Muallā* (Jaipur MS), the number must have gone up at least by 5,000.
4. For details see Ganda Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, pp. 63-64; *Prāchin Panth Prakāsh*, p. 110.
5. Folio 35b-36b.
6. *Muntakhībul Lubās*, II. 654.
7. Mohammed Kasim's *Ibratanāma*, p. 21.
8. Kamwar Khan's *Tazkiratus Salāti-Chughtāyia*, 150b.
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11. *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 178 f.n.
12. Inayat Ali Khan's *Description of Kotla Afgans*, p. 14.
13. *Raqāti-i-Aminud Daula*, Letter iii.
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15. *Ibratnama*, by Mohd. Harisi. 41 a-b; *Later Mughal*, I. 101.

16. *Calcutta Review*, LX. 23; Karam Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, 85-86.
17. *Muntakhibul Lubās*, II. 655; Eliot & Dowson, VII. 416; *Later Mughals*, I. 101-2; *Calcutta Review*, LX. 23.
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19. *Muāsirul Umarā*, III. 127; Harisi's *Ibratnāmā*, 42a; *Muntakhibul Lubāb*, II. 658.
20. Elliot, VII, 418-19; *Later Mughals*, I, 100.
21. *The Panth Prakāsh* of Rattan Singh and Gyan Singh both place the Haidri Flag crusade long after the death of Banda, but we have followed here the contemporary book *Ibratnāmā*, of Mohammed Qasim and also *Umdatul Twārikh* and *Chahār Gulshan-i-Panjab* which are based on original sources.
22. *Chahār Gulshan-i-Panjab*, 189-190; Mohd. Qasim's *Ibratnāmā*, 22; Irvine, I. 103.
23. Mohd; Qasim's *Ibratnāmā*, 22; *Muntakhibul Lubās*, II. 660; Prachin *P. Prakāsh*, 117.
24. *The Sketch*, 99.
25. *Later Mughals*, I. III; *Hadiqatul Aqālin*, 129.
26. Khafī Khan, II. 669-70, Kanwar's *Taskirātus Salātin*, 153a.
27. Iradat Khan's *Memories*, 62; Khafī Khan, II. 672-3; *Dastural Inshā*, 8b; *Ruqaat-i-Aminud Daulā*, Letter 4; Qasim's *Ibratnāmā*; Kanwar's *Tazkira*, 154b.
28. The account given here of the expedition to the Sivaliks is taken mainly from Rattan Singh's *Prāchin Panth Prakash*.
29. *Later Mughals*, I. 119.
30. *Tārikh-i-Mohammed Shāhi*, 224a.
31. *Dastur-ul Inshā*, 9b; *Ruqaat-i-Aminud Daulā*, Letter 5.
32. *Siyarul Mutaakhirin* (Raymond, I. 21-22; Birggs. 19-20).
33. The actual site of this village is marked by a big heap of ruins, known as *Bande Vāli Theh*, lying one mile from the present village of Gurdas Nangal.
34. *Ibratnāmā*. 42.
35. *Later Mughals*, I. 315; *Muntakhibul Lubāb*; II. 763.
36. *Tazikīrātus Salātin*, b; Kahfi Khan, II. 763-5; *Ibratnāmā* of Harisi.45 a; Irvine, I. 315.
37. *Siyarul Mutaakhirin*, 403.
38. Kesar Singh's *Bansāvali-nāma*, 294 a; Karam Singh's *Banda Bahadur*, 180.
39. Harisi's *Ibratnama*, 53. For another account of the same scene by an eye-witness, see-Mohammed's *Rabassirat-un-Nazirin*, 187 a. See also C.R. Wilson. *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, II. xiii.

40. Latter, dated March 10, 1761. written by John Surman and Edward Stephenson, members of the British Embassy to the court of Farrukh Siyar, and addressed to the President and Governor of Fort William. It is published in J.T. Wheeler's *Early Records of British India*, p. 180, and in C.R. Wilson's *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, pp. 96-98. See also *Haqiqat*, 15.
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51. Mohammed Shafi Warid, *Mirat-i-Waridat*.
52. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Muallā* (Jaipur), dated 21st Rabi-ul-Awwal, 5 Bahadur Shahi (April 28, 1711 A.D.) Also see *Ruqaat-i-Aminud Daula*, iii.
53. *Akhbar-i-Darbar-Muallā* (Jaipur), fragment, undated (13th Rabi-ul-sani, 5 Bahadur Shahi).
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The Rise and Fall of Banda Bahadur

Khushwant Singh¹

The First Round :

Peasant Upsurge in Eastern Punjab

Guru Gobind Singh tried for many months to persuade Bahadur Shah to take action against Wazir Khan before he arrived at the conclusion that he would obtain no justice from the Mughals. He continued to negotiate with the Emperor, but decided to send one of his followers back to the Punjab to rouse the peasantry in the event that the negotiations proved fruitless. Guru Gobind Singh armed Banda with five arrows from his quiver and gave him his own standard and battle drum. He also issued orders (*hukamnāmās*) to the Sikhs, urging them to volunteer for service.

Banda left the Deccan with a small band and came northwards. In the vicinity of Delhi he learned that the Emperor, Bahadur Shah, was still involved fighting his own brother in the Deccan and that the Rajputs were in open revolt. Banda also received information of the murderous assault on Gobind Singh. Before the assassin's dagger could achieve its fatal consummation, he planted the Guru's standard in a village thirty-five miles from the capital and forwarded the Guru's letters ordering the Sikhs to join him.²

Although the Guru had specifically restricted his role to that of military commander of a punitive expedition,³ Banda widened it to embrace a spiritual ministry as well. Crowds began to flock to his camp; men in arms to join his colours; women to seek his blessings

for their families.⁴ He preached sermons and gave benedictions. Having an avowed contempt for worldly goods, he gave away the offerings people placed before him. As stories of his piety and generosity spread, more men and money began to pour in. Encouraged by the response, Banda issued a proclamation offering protection to any one "threatened by thieves, dacoits or highway robbers, troubled by Mohammedan bigots, or in any way subjected to injustice or ill-treatment."⁵ The proclamation was like a spark in a highly inflammable situation. The peasants of Malwa rose against the zamindars and local officials. Banda opened the flood-gates to a sea of pent-up hatred, and all he could do was to ride on the crest of the wave of violence that he had let loose. He could not, nor did he try to, direct its course, knowing full well that he who rides a tiger cannot afford to dismount.

Banda left the neighbourhood of Delhi and travelled northwards along the Grand Trunk Road. He entered Sonapat, looted the state treasury and then homes of the rich, and distributed whatever he got among his men. He sent a column to take Kaithal and led another to Samana.

Kaithal fell without much resistance and was spared. But a grim fate awaited Samana, a wealthy town with many palatial buildings and mosques. It was also the home of the executioners of the ninth guru, Tegh Bahadur, and Gobind's two sons. The town was stormed on November 26, 1709. The frenzied followers of Banda overcame resistance by sheer weight of numbers. The defenders did not expect to receive any quarter from the attackers. They fought on for three days until all that remained was a heap of smouldering ruins and ten thousand corpses strewn about the streets.⁶ Samana was the first notable victory to Sikh arms.⁷

The fate of Samana left no doubt in the mind of Wazir Khan, the subedar of Sirhind, of the real objectives of Banda. Armed peasants from all over the central districts of the Punjab were reported to be converging towards Sirhind. Wazir Khan sent urgent messages for help to Bahadur Shah and took the only chance he had of holding out by preventing the Majhail peasants north of the Sutlej from

crossing the river and joining the men of Malwa under Banda. An army consisting largely of Afghans from Malerkotla was sent to keep the Majhails on the north side of the river, while strong detachments were posted on the fords and all ferries grounded.

Banda proceeded on his triumphant march through the heart of Malwa. He plundered Ghuram, Shahabad, Mustafabad, Kapuri, and Sadhaura and came to Sirhind, detested in the eyes of the Sikhs for the executions of their Guru's sons, and the home of the murderers Wazir Khan and Dewan Sucha Nand.

Banda's progress made the Afghans on the Sutlej anxious for the safety of their rear and they deployed a part of their forces to oppose him. The Majhails utilised the opportunity and crossed the river near Ropar. The Afghans fought a delaying action and then retreated before they could be crushed between the jaws of the Majhail-Malwa nut-cracker. Banda joined the advancing Majhails half-way from Ropar.

The winter months were spent in training and collecting arms. Since Banda promised land to the landless and loot to everyone, there was no dearth of recruits. But he was not able to get guns or many muskets. Nevertheless, by spring he felt strong enough to measure swords with the Mughals, and he led an enormous host against Sirhind.

Wazir Khan had not been idle. He convinced the Muslim landowners that if Banda won, they would be ruined. He also persuaded the mullahs to preach a holy war against the infidel.⁸

Wazir Khan's troops met Banda's peasants ten miles outside the city and immediately ordered his batteries to open fire. The peasants charged the cannons and came to grips with the enemy. The perponderance of numbers gave them an advantage in the hand-to-hand struggle that ensued. Wazir Khan was killed and the morale of his troops collapsed. The battle ended in the complete rout and massacre of the Mughal army and the *ghāzis*. "Not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in," wrote Khafi Khan. "Horsemen and footmen fell under the swords of the infidels, who pursued them as far as Sirhind."⁹

Two days later Banda stormed Sirhind. He entered the town on May 14, 1710. Wazir Khan was dead, but Sucha Nand, the Dewan who had pressed him to execute Guru Gobind's sons, was taken alive. Besides the odium which attached to the names of these men for their share in the crime, the peasants had their own grievances. "I have heard from reliable people of the neighbourhood," wrote a diarist of the times, "that during the time of the late Khan there was no cruelty that he had not inflicted upon the poor subjects, and that there was no seed of which he now reaped the fruit that he had not sown for himself."¹⁰

Sirhind was destroyed in detail; only a few mausoleams were spared. Wazir Khan's palace and the treasury of Sucha Nand yielded handsome booty to the conquerors.

Banda was now virtual master of the territories between the Jumna and the Sutlej, yielding an annual revenue of thirty-six lacs of rupees. His sun was in the ascendant. Either from conviction or fear or profit (or a combination of the three) a great many Hindu and Muslim peasants accepted conversion to Sikhism.¹¹ Banda was too shrewd to place much reliance on the loyalties of the new converts and he made the old fort of Mukhlisgarh, in the safety of the Himalayas, his headquarters. Thus, Banda as a military commander had become *Banda bahādur* - the brave, assumed his third incarnation as *Banda pādsāh*, the Emperor. He introduced a new calendar dating from his capture of Sirhind. He had new coins struck to mark his reign, bearing the names of Guru Nanak and Gobind. His seal had inscribed on it not only the names of the gurus but also the two things which had contributed most to the popularity and power of the Sikhs and their church - the *deg*h or cauldron in the Guru's *langar* and the *tegh*, the sword of the Khalsa.¹²

At Mukhlisgarh, Banda learned that Bahadur Shah, after subduing his brother in the Deccan, was contemplating the subjugation of Rajasthan and not likely to return to Delhi before the monsoons. Banda decided to utilize the opportunity to destroy the remaining vestiges of Mughal rule in Northern India.

In the height of summer, when the river bed was almost dry, Banda crossed the Jumna and invested Sharanpur. His arrival was a signal for Gujjar herdsmen to rise against the Nawabs and zamindars, who had oppressed them for many decades. They decalred themselves *Nānakprasth* (followers of Nanak) and joined their fellow peasants from the Punjab. The local *faujdār* (military commander), and those who could get away, fled to Delhi. Of those that remained "many men of noble and respectable families fell fighting bravely and obtained the honour of martyrdom."¹³

Saharanpur was ruthlessly plundered. After Saharanpur, fell the neighbouring towns of Behat and Ambheta. Just as the monsoons broke, Nanauta was captured by the Gujjars and razed to the ground.

Panic spread in the Jumna-Gangetic Doab. The rich fled eastwards to Oudh or northwards into the hills. The sight of an Sikh lancer on horseback was enough to terrorise a whole village.¹⁴

Banda's progress eastwards was halted by the monsoons and the resistance put up at Jalalabad. He also received appeals from the peasants of the Jullundur Doab to help them against the Mughal *faujdār*. He raised the siege of Jalalabad and recrossed the Jumna before the monsoon made it unfordable.

The news of Banda's return to the Punjab was enough to put heart into the Malwa peasantry. They defeated the Mughal *faujdār* at Rahon (the *faujdār* was the first victim of the tactics for which the Śkhs became famous. This was the *dhāi phut* - hit, run, and turn back to hit again. They seized Jullundur and Hoshiarpur and by the autumn of 1710 liberated the whole of Jullundur Doab.

The Second Round :

From the Plains to the Hills

The revolt spread across the Sutlej over the whole of the Majha country. Starting from Amritsar, the peasant armies marched northwards towards the hills, taking Kalanaur, Batala, and Pathankot. Then they overran the tract between the Sutlej and the Ravi. The Punjab became like a surging sea of free peasantry with only two small islands of Mughal authority in its midst - the capital city of Lahore and the Afghan town of Kasur.

Mughal officials tried to suppress the uprising by appealing to the religious sentiments of the Mohammedan peasantry. For some time this policy paid dividends and the newly-recruited *ghāzīs* helped the Mughal militia to keep the Sikhs at bay a few miles from Lahore. Then their sympathies with the peasants overcame the feeling of religious animosity which had been whipped up by the landlords, and they turned back to their homes. The Sikhs advanced, decimated the militiamen near the village of Shahiwal, and swarmed over the countryside round Lahore.

From the Jamuna to the Ravi and beyond, the only person who mattered was Banda, and the only power that commanded respect was that of the peasant armies. Meanwhile, Bahadur Shah abandoned his plans to subdue the Rajputs and without pausing at Delhi hurried north to the Punjab.¹⁵

The Emperor ordered a general mobilisation of all his forces in Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and Oudh, and called for volunteers for a *jihād* (holy war)¹⁶ against the Sikhs. He also persuaded the Bundela Rajputs to join in the campaign. With him were his four sons and the flower of the Mughal army. Firoz Khan was appointed leader of the campaign.

Firoz Khan took the offensive at once and defeated the peasant army at Amingarh. Within a month the imperial armies recovered possession of Thanesar, Karnal, and Shahabad. By Decemer 1710, Mughal rule was re-established in the Malwa plains.

Banda retreated to his fortress in the mountains. The concourse of Mughals, Meos, Pathans, Afghans, and Rajputs went after him. When the fleeing peasants came in sight of the hills, they turned on their pursuers and severely mauled the van of the Mughal army. The name of Banda had become a source of terror. He was reputed to be able to deflect a bullet from its course and work such spells that neither spear nor sword could injure his men.¹⁷

Imperial armies eventually surrounded the fortress of Mukhlisgarh. But Banda and a small band of picked swordsmen made a sortie one night and hacked their way out of the imperial cordon.

Next morning (December 11, 1710) the Mughals stormed the fortress and captured the few men who had remained. Among them was one Gulab Singh who resembled and had dressed himself like Banda. The exultation over the capture of the dreaded Banda turned to chagrin when it was discovered that "the hawk had flown and they had trapped an owl instead."

Bahadur Shah spent his wrath on the handful of prisoners who were taken and on the innocent Raja of Nahan, into whose territories Banda had escaped. The Raja and the heroic Gulab Singh were put in iron cages and sent to Delhi. Other prisoners, including thirty retainers who had accompanied the Nahan Raja to plead for their ruler, were handed over to the executioner.

Within fifteen days of his escape from Mukhlisgarh, Banda began to send *hukamnāms* exhorting the people to liberate the Punjab once more and to join him at Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills. He decided to secure the submountainous hinterland before descending on the plains. His first victim was the tormentor of his guru, Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur.

The ageing Bhim Chand did not have the stamina to fight the tireless Banda. Bilaspur capitulated and was sacked. Mandi, Kulu, and Chamba submitted of their own accord.

In the spring of 1711, Banda came down into the plains again. Early in June 1711 an engagement was fought at Bahrampur near Jammu, in which the Mughals were worsted. Banda took Bahrampur and Raipur and then sacked Batala. The Emperor came in hot pursuit and Banda again retreated into the hills. Once again Bahadur Shah (who had begun to show symptoms of a deranged mind) wreaked his vengeance on innocent men and women: an order was issued for the wholesale massacre of Sikhs.¹⁸

The Emperor reached Lahore in August 1711. For the next five months his courtiers fed him on stories of Mughal victories over Banda's rabble. But as the days rolled by with Banda still free, still defiant, the Emperor became a depressive melancholic. He died on February 28, 1712.

The battle for succession between the Emperor's sons began immediately. It was too good an opportunity for Banda to miss. He descended on the plains, re-occupied Sadhaura, and once more sent out proclamations.

The Third Round :

Banda's Final Stand at Gurdaspur Nangal,

His Capture and Execution

The battle for succession was eventually won by Jahāndar Shah. As soon as he had disposed of his brothers, he turned his attention to the rebellion in the Punjab. Mughal armies again closed in on Sadhaura and Mukhlisgarh. The sieze dragged on for eight long months. He had some relief towards the end of 1712, when the attention of the besieging force was diverted by the rebellion of Jahandar's nephew, Farrukh Siyar. But Banda was unable to come down into the plains and as soon as Farrukh Siyar became Emperor, he sent two very energetic officers, Abdus Samad Khan, and his son Zakarya Khan, with specific instruction to destroy Banda.

Abdus Samad Khan's troops drove Banda out of Sadhaura and Mukhlisgarh and compelled him to retreat further into the Himalayan fastnesses. The peasant uprising was considered over. Abdus Samad Khan and his son were recalled to Delhi, where they were loaded with honours. They were ordered to direct their energies to the reconquest of Rajasthan.

Banda disappeared from the Punjab scene for over a year. He found a haven of peace in a small village a few miles above Jammu: Peasant leaders were, however, active in the plains and Farrukh Siyar had to send Abdus Samad Khan and his son back to the Punjab to chastise "that sect of mean and detestable Sikhs."¹⁹ An army of seven thousand peasants attacked Ropar and, though the attack was repelled, it was apparent that the people were restive again. In February 1715 Banda came down from his mountain retreat to measure his sword again with the Mughals.

Abdus Samad Khan assembled an army of Mughals, Pathans, Bundela Rajputs, and Rajputs of Katoch and Jasrota and moved northwards to face Banda.

In a village near Batala Banda dug himself in. Before he could complete his defence fortifications, the imperial forces came upon him. Artillery blasted Banda into the open field. Banda stood his ground and, to the amazement of Abdus Samad Khan, almost trounced his vastly superior forces. Even after the Mughals had recovered from the shock of Banda's violent assault and the tide of battle had begun to turn in their favour, they were unable to press the advantage to a successful conclusion. "For although vigorously pursued, he retired from post to post, and like a savage of the wilderness from thicket to thicket, losing an endless number of men and occasioning losses to his pursuers."²⁰

Banda fled northwards. But instead of disappearing into the mountains, he stopped a few miles above the present town of Gurdaspur and turned back to face his pursuers. He cut a canal and flooded the surrounding country in the hope that this would prevent the imperial artillery from getting too close to him. The operation proved to be the decisive factor in his defeat, for, although it prevented the besiegers' cannon from being placed within range, it also cut him off from supplies of food. Abdus Samad Khan surrounded Banda's artificial island and waited patiently for his victims to starve themselves into submission.

The siege dragged on interminably. There were occasional sorties by Banda's men to get provisions, and attempts by the Mughals to test the Sikh defences. An eyewitness gives the following account of the siege : "The brave and daring deeds of the infernal Sikhs was wonderful. Twice or thrice every day some forty or fifty of these black-faced infidels came out of their enclosure to gather grass for their cattle, and when the combined forces of the imperialists went to oppose them, they made an end of the Mughals with arrows, muskets, and small swords, and disappeared. Such was the terror of the Sikhs and the fear of the sorceries of the Sikh chief that the Commanders of this army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek safety in his flight from the fortress."²¹

The cordon round Banda was tightened by large reinforcements sent from Delhi. Abdus Samad Khan raised a wall around the island

to make egress impossible. So great was the belief in Banda's magical powers and so acute the anxiety to get him that even dogs and cats that strayed out of his fortress were immediately destroyed (lest Banda may have undergone a feline or canine transformation to make his escape).

Banda's provision ran out. His men ate their horses, mules, and even the forbidden oxen. Then dysentery broke out in epidemic form.

Banda held on doggedly. At the end of eight months not one of the besieged garrison had strength left to wield his sword or spear ultimately they were captured on December 17, 1715.²²

Abdus Samad Khan showed the manner in which he meant to plead for the lives of the vanquished foe. He ordered the immediate execution of over two hundred of the prisoners and filled "that extensive plain with blood as if it had been a dish."²³ The remainder, including Banda and his family, were put in chains and sent first to Lahore and then to Delhi.

Banda's hands were manacled to two soldiers on either side, his feet bound in fetters, an iron collar put round his neck, and he and his guards locked inside an iron cage. The other prisoners were likewise secured by iron chains around their necks, hands, and feet, and marched between flanks of Mughal soldiers. Zakarya han, who escorted the captives to Delhi, rounded up all the Sikhs he could find in the villages along his route until he had seven hundred bullock carts full of severed heads and over seven hundred prisoners. The gory caravan passed through Sirhind and reached Delhi at the end of February 1716. The captives were paraded through the streets. Banda was dressed in gold brocade to mock his pretensions to royalty; other prisoners had fool's caps put on their heads. Flanking the prisoners were soldiers bearing two thousand Sikh heads mounted on spears. The scene is described by an eye-witness in the following words : "Those unfourtunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to this last extremity, were quite happy and contented with their fate; not the slightest sign of dejection or humility was to be seen on their faces. In fact most of them,as they passed along on their camles.

seemed happy and cheerful, joyfully singing the sacred hymns of their Scripture. And, if any one from among those in the lanes and bazaars called out to them that their own excesses had reduced them to that condition, they quickly retorted saying that it had been so willed by the Almighty and that their caputre and misfortune was in accordance with His will. And, if any one said : 'Now you will be killed,' they shouted : 'Kill us. When were we afraid of death?' ”²⁴

The executions began on March 5, 1716 and continued for a week. They were watched by thousands of citizens, including two Englishmen who were then in attendance at the Mughal court. In a despatch dated March 10, 1716, they described what they saw :

“The great Rebel Gooroo who has been for these twenty years so troublesome in the *sūbāship* of Lahore is at length taken with all his family and attendants by Adbus Samad Cawn, the *sūbā* of that province. Some days ago they entered the city laden with fetters, his whole attendants which were left alive being about seven hundred and eighty, all severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the city for that purpose, besides about two thousand heads stuck upon poles, being those who died by the sword in battle. He was carried into the presence of the king, and from thence to a close prison. He at present has his life prolonged with most of his *mutسادis* in hope to get an account of his treasure in the several parts of his kingdom and of those that assisted him, when after wards he will executed, for the rest there are a hundred each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatised from this new formed religion.”²⁵

For three months Banda was subjected to systematic torture in the hope that he would give some clue to the wealth he was reputed to have accumulated. Eventually, on Sunday, June 19, 1716, he, his four-year-old son, and five of his commanders, along with another batch of Sikh prisoners, were again paraded through the streets of Delhi on their way to the tomb of Bahadur Shah in Mehrauli, eleven miles from the city.

Before execution Banda was offered pardon if he renounced his faith and accepted Islam. On his refusal to do so, his son, Ajai Singh, was hacked to bits before his eyes. A Mughal nobleman said to Banda : "It is surprising that one, who shows so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct, should have been guilty of such horrors." Banda replied : "I will tell you. Whenever men become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, then Providence never fails to raise up a scourge like me to chastise a race so depraved; but when the measure of punishment is full then he raises up men like you to bring him to punishment."²⁶

Thus died Banda Bahadur - a man who first chose to renounce the world to live in the peaceful seclusion of a sylvan hermitage, then renounced both pacificism and the life of solitude to rouse a downtrodden peasantry to take up arms; a man who shook one of the most powerful empires in the world to its very foundations with such violence that it was never again able to re-establish its authority.²⁷

Although Banda's success was short-lived, it proved that the peasants were discontented and that the administration had become feeble. In seven stormy years Banda changed the class structure of land holdings in the southern half of the state by liquidating many of the big Muslim zamindar (land owning) families of Malwa and the Jullundur Doab. Large estates were first broken up into smaller holdings in the hands of Sikh or Hindu peasants. With the rise of Sikh power these holdings were once again grouped together to form large estates, but in the hands of Sikh chieftains.

The movements to infuse the sentiment of Punjabi nationalism in the masses received a setback with Banda. The wanton destruction of life and property of Mughal officials and landowners alienated the sympathies of great number of Muslims who began to look upon the Khalsa as the enemies of Islam. Until then only the richer classes of Muslims had been imbued with notions of Islamic revival preached by men like Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi; Banda's savagery hardened

hearts of the Muslim peasants and made them as anti-Sikh as their government.

The Muslims looked upon Banda as the author of the *Siyār* described him : "a barbarian, whom nature had formed for a butcher an infernal monster."²⁸ It was a long time before the Muslim masses were willing to join the Hindus and Sikhs to defend their country against the imperial forces and foreign invaders.

REFERENCES

1. A History of Sikhs, Oxford, 1999, pp. 101-119
2. Bahadur Shah did not learn of the activities of Banda nor of Banda's connection with the late Guru Gobind Singh until much later. In the *Bahādur Shāh Nāmā* dated November 17, 1708 there is a report regarding "The disposal of the movable property left by Guru Gobind Nanak..... It was considerable and according to rule ought to be confiscated. The Emperor with the remark that he was not in favour of sequestering the goods of *darves*, ordered the whole to be relinquished to the heirs..... One Ajit Singh, who passed as the Guru's son, was brought to the Emperor, was invested with a robe of honour, and taken into imperial service." (This Ajit Singh was an adopted son of Mata Sundari. He was later executed in Delhi.)
3. Gyani Gyan Singh in his *Panth Prakās* has Banda claim the following mission :

To wreak vengeance on the Turk hath the
 Guru sent me who am his slave.
 I will kill and ruin Wazira's household;
 I will plunder and rob Sirhind.
 I will avenge the murders of the Guru's sons,
 then destroy the chieftains of the hills.
 When all thee I accomplished, then
 know me as Banda, the Salve of the Guru.
4. "Those who asked for sons he blessed with sons; to those who asked for milk he gave milch cattle. If any one came stricken with pain, he prayed for him and removed his suffering....." (Ratan Singh Bhangu. *Prācīn Panth Prakās*, p. 94.)

5. Sohan Singh, *Bandā Singh Bahādur*, p. 39.
6. Sohan Lal, *Umdāt-ut-Tawārikh*, I, 78.
7. "It is unnecessary to state the particulars of this memorable invasion which, from all accounts, appears to have been one of the severest scourges with which a country was every afflicted. Every excess that the most wanton barbarity could commit, every cruelty that an unappeased appetite of revenge could suggest, was inflicted upon the miserable inhabitants of the provinces through which they passed. Life was only granted to those who conformed to the religion and adopted the habits and dress of the Sikhs." (Sir J. Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*.)

The tales of atrocities are supported by Sikh historians, Gyan Singh in *samsir Khālsā* and Ratan Singh Bhangu in *Prācīn Panth Prakāś*.

8. There are many accounts of the battle of Sirhind. The most reliable of them is that of Mohammed Hashim Khafi Khan in the *Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb*. He mentions Wazir Khan's forces as comprising 15,000 men equipped with muskets and cannon. In addition, there were the volunteer *ghāzīs* (crusaders) armed with swords, spears, bows and arrows. Banda's forces must have considerably outnumbered Wazir Khan's. But he had neither cannon nor elephants, only a few horsemen and some musketeers. His army was largely composed of peasants armed with spears, hatchets, and farming implements which could be used as weapons.
9. *Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb* II, 654; *Later Mughuls*, pp. 27-28 (where the atrocities committed by Banda's peasants are mentioned in detail).
10. Mohammed Qasim, *Ibrat Nāmā*, 20-21.
11. Names of officers on record bear testimony to quick conversions, e.g. Ali Singh, Mir Nasir Singh, Dindar Singh. This is supported by a contemporary account by Aminuddaulah : "A large number of Mohammedans abandoned Islam and followed the misguided path and took solemn oaths and firm pledges to stand by him." (Ganda Singh, *Bandā Singh Bahādur*, p. 73).
12. The Persian inscription on Banda's coins was as follows :

Obvers

Sikkā zad har do ālam tegh-i-Nānak sāhib ast

fateh Gobind Singh sāh-i-sāhān fazl-i-sacā sāhib ast.

Coins struck for the two worlds with the sword of Nanak
and the victory granted by the grace of Gobind Singh.

King of Kings and the true Emperr.

Reverse

*Zarb ba aman-ud-dahar masavarat sahar zinat-ul
takht-i-mubarak bakth.*

Struck in the haven of refuge, the beautiful city, the
ornament of the blessed throne.

The inscription on Banda's seal became a model for future inscriptions on
Sikh coins and seals :

*deg o tegh o fateh o nusrat-i-bedrang
yaft az Nānak guru Gobind Singh.*

Through hospitality and the sword to unending
victory granted by Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh.

13. *Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb*, I, 655.

14. The revolution that had taken place in one year is well summed up by
Irvine in this *Later Mughuls* : "A low scavenger or leather dresser, the
lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the
Guru [referring to Banda], when in a short time he would return to his
birth-place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon
as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to
greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with
joined palms, awaiting his orders.... Not a soul dared to disobey an order,
and men who had often risked themselves in battlefields became so cowed
down that they were afraid even to remonstrate. Hindus who had not joined
the sect were no exempt from these." (i, 98-99).

15. Khafi Khan writes : "For eight or nine months, and from two or three days
march from Delhi to the environs of Lahore, all the towns and places of
note were pillaged by these unclean wretches, and trodden under foot and
destroyed. Men in countless numbers were slain, the whole country was
wasted, and mosques and tombs were razed.... These infidels had set up a
new rule, and had forbidden the shaving of the hair of the head and beard.
...The revolt and ravages of this perverse sect were brought under the notice
of His Majesty, and greatly troubled him". (32-33).

16. Bahadur Sah rightly suspected that most Hindus were in sympathy with
the rebellion and had secretly accepted conversion to the Sikh faith. Early
in September 1710 he issued a proclamation to "all Hindus employed in the
Imperial offices to shave off their beards." (*Bahādur Shāh Nāmā*.)

Iradat Khan, a courtier in Bahadur Shah's camp, wrote : "Though this
insurrection was not of such importance as to disturb the general repose of
the Empire, yet His Majesty, Defender of the Faith, hearing that the malice

of the rebels was directed against the religion, thought it his duty to engage them in person." (Syed Mohammed Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 277).

17. Khafi Khan wrote that "the Sikhs in their Fakir dress struck terror in the royal troops." (*Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb*, II, 669-670.)
18. Khushal Chand, *Tārīkh-i-Mohammed Shāhī*, 224-A.
19. Mohamimed Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirā-us-Salātīn Chughtiyā*, 176-B.
20. *Siyār-ul-Mutākherīn*, 77.
21. Mohammed Qasim, *Ibrat Nāmā*, 42.
23. Banda's heroic stand won admiration from his enemies. The contemporary historian Kamwar Khan wrote : "It was by the grace of God and not by wisdom or bravery that this came to happen. It is known to everyone that the late Emperor Bahadur Shah, with four royal princes and numerous generals, had made efforts to repress this rebellion, but it was all fruitless, and now that infidel of the Sikhs and a few thousand of his companions have been starved into surrender." (Mohammed Hadi Kamwar Khan, *Tazkirā-us-Salātīn Chughtiyā*, 179.)
23. *Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb*, viii.
24. Mirza Mohammed Harisi, *Ibrat Nāmā*.
25. Report by John Surman and Edward Stephenson in J. T. Wheeler, *Early Records of British India*, p. 180.

Even the author of *Siyār-ul-Mutākherīn* admitted reluctantly that "these people not only behaved firmly during the execution, but they would dispute and wrangle with each other for priority in execution." (79).

A particularly harrowing tale is told by Khafi Khan in the *Muntakhab-ul-Lubāb*. One of the prisoners was a newly married young boy, the only son of a widow. The mother succeeded in obtaining a pardon from the Emperor. She brought the order of release just in time to save her son. The boy refused to be saved. "My mother is a liar. I devote my heart and soul to my Gurus. Let me join my companions." The boy went back to the executioner and "was enrolled among the truest of the martyrs produced by the Sikh religion." (II, 761; reproduced in *Later Mughuls*.)

26. *Siyār-ul-Mutākherīn*, 79-80.

27. Muslim historians, who were invariably attached to and dependent on the patronage of the ruling class, have for these obvious reasons interpreted the role of Banda as an enemy of Islam and also exaggerated the tales of atrocities committed by its followers. Syed Mohammed Latif's opinion based on these reports (*History of the Punjab*, p. 280) is as follows :

"Though bravery is a qualification which is highly meritorious, and in all cases one which is handed down to posterity, yet the audacious achievements

of this monster are an exception to the rule. His triumphs are not remembered as heroic acts, but as malicious and cold-blooded atrocities. His ruling and insatiabel passion was that of pouring out Mohammedan blood. At the present day his name is never mentioned in any part of India unaccompanied with maledictions on his savagery and blood-thirsty propensities. His memory is held in the same detestation by the Sikhs as by the Mohammedans."

As pointed out by Thornton (*History of the Punjab*, p. 176), "a Mohammedan writer is not to be implicitly trusted upon such a point"; nor, it might be added, a Sikh like Gyan Singh, exaggerating the reports in a spirit of anti-Muslim exultation. Banda's followers were undoubtedly guilty of savagery practised by most victorious armies of the time, but the movement was clearly an agrarian revolt and not an anti-Islamic crusade.

28. *Siyār-ul-Mutākherin*, 72, 76.

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Banda Singh Bahadur's Struggle for Sovereignty

Prof. Harbans Singh*

The eighteenth century in the Punjab was a period of great political upheaval and turmoil. It witnessed a prolonged drama of constant battle, foreign invasion and internal conflict. Warring powers, such as Mughals, Marathas and Afghans, strove with each other for supremacy. Their mutual fighting produced conditions of utter confusion and anarchy. But order gradually evolved out of a completely chaotic situation and the process took a whole century to work itself out. The Mughal authority in the Punjab had begun showing signs of weakness soon after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, and the subsequent perplexity and disharmony continued until 1799 – the year the Sikh ruler, Ranjit Singh, occupied Lahore and laid the foundations of a peaceful State.

For Sikhs this was a time of grim trial and supreme moral exaltation which accrued to them because of their heroic fight for their faith and their perseverance in meeting the challenge of a sustained and fierce persecution. They suffered continual oppression almost throughout the century and there were moments when their persecutors thought they had extirpated the entire sect. To crush their existence the Mughal rulers had, in fact, vowed themselves.

* The Heritage of the Sikhs. New Delhi. 1964. pp 45-51.

They were outlawed and ordered to be killed at sight and a severed Sikh head brought the tyrant a reward from the Government.

The Sikhs matched the situation with a rare power of endurance and resolution. They sanctified this period of their history with deeds of unparalleled sacrifice and courage and the Sikh character presented in this testing time its noble aspect. In the strife that was forced upon them lay seed of their subsequent political ascendancy and they were able to set up their authority in the Punjab after vanquishing their persecutors. But in the midst of direst struggle they never went back on their high-minded religious ideal, nor forswore their spirit of magnanimity.

History records a high and unusual to Sikhs' qualities of courage and integrity during this period of harrowing oppression. The attester is their sworn enemy. Qazi Nur Mohammad, who came to India with the army of Ahmad Shah Durrani at the time of his seventh incursion into the country (1764-65) and was witness to Sikhs' battles with the invader. In his poetic account, in Persian, of the Durrani's invasion, he refers to the Sikhs in rude and imprecatory language, but cannot at the same time help proclaiming their many natural virtues. In section XLI of his poem, for example, he says :

"Do not call the 'dogs' [his contemptuous term for Sikhs] dogs, for they are lions, and are courageous like lions in the field of battle. How can a hero, who roars like a lion in the field of battle, be called a dog ? If you wish to learn the art of war, come to face to face with them in the field. They will demonstrate it to you in such a way that one and all will praise them for it. If you wish to learn the science of war, O swordsman, learn from them how to face an enemy like a hero and to get safely out of an action. *Singh* is a title [a form of address for them]. It is not justice to call them dogs. If you do not know the Hindustani language [I shall tell you that] the word *Singh* means a lion. Truly, they are like lions in battle and, in times of peace, they surpass Hatim [in generosity]..

"Leaving aside their mode of fighting, hear ye another point in which they excel all other fighting people. In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive.

They do no plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or a maidservant. There is no adultery among these 'dogs'... they do not make friends with adulterers and housebreakers..."

The Sikh leader who presaged a troublous century's daring chain of events was Banda Singh Bahadur. From Nander where the last of the Skh prophets, Guru Gobind Sinh, had died, he came to the Punjab armed with the Guru's belssings and with a drum, a banner and five arrows as emblems of the authority the Guru had bestowed upon him. He issued *hukamnamas*, or edicts, to Sikhs in the Punjab calling upon them to join him. His object was to attack the town of Sirhind where two of Guru Gobind Singh's sons had met with a cruel fate at the hands of Wazir Khan, the Mughal governor. Seizing Samana and Sadhaura, Banda Singh reached Sirhind on May 14, 1710 and occupied the town routing the army of Wazir Khan. Baj Singh, one Banda Singh's leading companions, was made the governor of Sirhind.

Banda Singh thus laid the foundation of Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab. He assumed the style of royalty and struck coins in the name of the Guru. Rendered into English, the Persian inscription on his coins read :

By the grace of True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds :

The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons, and the victory of Guru Gobind Singh, the King of Kings.

Banda Singh's rule, though short-lived, had a far-reaching impact on the history of the Punjab. With it began the decay of Mughal authority and the demolition of the feudal system of society it had created. Banda Singh abolished the Zamindari system and made the tillers masters of the land they had been cultivating for their landlords. This marked a revolutionary change in the social order in the Punjab and led to the emergence of peasants as a potent force in the political life of the country.

Banda Singh's increasing influence roused the ire of the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, who journeyed northwards from the Deccan to punish the Sikhs. Instructions were issued to the Subadars of Delhi

and Oudh and other Mughal officers to march towards the Punjab. Prohibitory laws against the Sikhs were passed. Fearing that some Sikhs might not have smuggled themselves into the royal camp disguised as Hindus, Bahadur Shah ordered all Hindus employed in the imperial offices to shave off their beards.

The massive imperial force drove the Sikhs from Sirhind and other places to take shelter in the fort of Lohgarh in the submontane region. Here they made a determined stand. "It is impossible for me," says Khafi Khan, a Muslim historian of that time, "to describe the fight which followed. The Sikhs in their faqir's dress struck terror into the royal troops. The number of casualties among the latter was so large that for a time it appeared as if they were going to lose."

Further reinforcements arrived and sixty thousand horse and foot closely invested Banda Singh's hilly retreat. For want of provisions, Sikhs were reduced to rigorous straits. They killed their horses for food and, when they could stand up to the enemy no longer, they made a desperate nightly sally to escape into the hills of Nahan.

Sikhs came out of their mountainous haunts to recover their lost territories and occupied once again Sadhaura and Lohgarh. Farrukh Siyar, who came to the throne of Delhi in 1713, launched against them sternest proceedings that political authority stirred with a fanatical religious zeal could devise. They were hounded out of the plains of the Punjab and their main column, under Banda Singh, was subjected to a most stringent siege at the village of Gurdas-Nangal, about four miles from Gurdaspur. Gurdas-Nangal was the epic of purest heroism in face of heavy odds. According to Mohammad Qasim, the Muslim autor of *Ibratnamah*, who has given an eye-witness account of this campaign, Sikhs' "brave and daring deeds were amazing. Twice or thrice a day, some forty or fifty of them would come out of their enclosure to gather grass for the animals, and when the combined forces of the Emperor went to oppose them, they made short work of the Mughals with arrows, muskets and small swords, and, then, disappeared. Such was the terror of these people and the fear of the sorcery of their chief that the

commanders of the royal army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda should seek safety in flight."

The supplies having run out, the Sikhs suffered grave hardship and lived on animal flesh which they had to eat raw, for there was no fuel to make a fire. To quote Khafi Khan again, "Many died of dysentery and privation... When all the grass was gone, they gathered leaves from trees. When these were consumed, they stripped the bark and broke off the small shoots, dried them, ground them down and used them instead of flour, thus keeping body and soul together. They also collected the bones of animals and used them in the same way. Some assert that they saw a few of the Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs, roast it, and eat it."

For eight long months, the garrison resisted the siege under these gruesome conditions. The royal armies at last broke through and captured Banda Singh and his famishing Sikhs. Nearly three hundred of them were killed on the spot, filling, as another contemporary Muslim historian Kamwar Khan, the author of *Tazkirat-us-Salatin*, says, "that extensive plain with blood as if it had been a dish." The rest, along with Banda Singh, were taken to Lahore, and, thence to Delhi. The cavalcade to the imperial capital formed a most awesome spectacle. Besides 740 prisoners in heavy chains, it comprised seven hundred cartloads of the heads of decapitated Sikhs with another 2,000 stuck upon pikes.

C. R. Wilson, a Bengal civilian, has given in his *Early Annals of the English in Bengal* the following description of the entry of the Sikh captives into Delhi :

Malice did its utmost to cover the vanquished with ridicule and shame. First came the heads of the executed Sikhs, stuffed with straw, and stuck on bamboos, their long hair streaming in the wind like a veil, and along with them to show that every living creature in Gurdaspur had perished, a dead cat on a pole. The teacher (Banda Singh) himself, dressed out of mockery in a turban of red cloth, embroidered with gold, and a heavy robe of brocade, flowered with pomegranates, sat in an iron cage, placed on the back of an elephant. Behind him stood a mailclad officer, with a drawn sword. After him

came the other prisoners, seven hundred and forty in number seated two and two upon camels without saddles. Each wore a high fools cap of sheepskin and had one hand pinned to his neck; between two pieces of wood. Many were also dressed in sheepskin with woolly side turned outwards. At the end of the procession rode three great nobles. Muhammad Amin Khan, sent by the emperor to bring in prisoners (from Agharabad to the Lahori gate of the palace). Qamrud-Din, his son and Zakariya Khan, his son-in-law, who being also the son of Abd-us-Samad Khan had been deputed to represent his father at the ceremony. The road to the palace, for several miles, was lined with troops and filled with exultant crowds, who mocked at the teacher and laughed at the grotesque appearance of his followers. They wagged their heads and pointed the finger of scorn at the poor wrteched as they passed. 'Hu !Hu!, infidel dog-worshippers, your day has come. Truly, retribution follows on transgression, as wheat springs from wheat, and barley from barley!' Yet the triumph could not have seemed complete. Not all the insults that their enemies had invented could rob the teacher and his followers of their dignity. Without any sign of dejection or shame, they rode on, calm, cheerful, even anxious to die the death of martyrs. Life was promised to any who would renounce their faith, but they would not prove false to their Guru, and at the place of suffering their constancy was wonderful to look at. 'Me, deliverer, kill me first,' was the prayer which constantly rang in the ears of the executioner. One there was, a young man, an only son, whose widowed mother had made many applications to the Mughal officers, declaring that her son was a Sikh prisoner, and no follower of the Guru. A release was granted and she hastened to the prison-house to claim her son. But the boy turned from her to meet his doom crying. 'I know not this woman. What does she want with me ? I am a true and loyal follower of the Guru.' For a whole week the sword of the executioner did its butcher's work. Every day a hundred brave men perished and at night the headless bodies were loaded into carts, taken out of the city, and hung upon trees. It was not till June 9 (Sunday, the 29th Jamadi-ul-Akhir, 1128 A.H., June 9, 1716 O.S.)

that Banda himself was led out to execution, all efforts having failed to buy him off. They dressed him, as on the day of his entry, set him again on an elephant, and took him away to the old city, where the red Qutab Minar lifts its proud head of white marble over the crumbling walls of the Hindu fortress. Here they paraded him round the tomb of the late emperor, Bahadur Shah and put him to a barbarous death. First they made him dismount, placed his child in his arms and bade him kill it. Then, as he refused to do so they ripped open the child before its father's eyes, thrust its quivering flesh into his mouth and hacked him to pieces limb by limb.

The ambassadors of the East India Company, John Surman and Edward Stephenson, who were then in Delhi and had witnessed some of these massacres, wrote to the Governor of Fort William :

The great Rebel Gooroo [Banda Singh] who has been for these 20 years so troublesome in the Subaship [suba] of Lahore is at length taken with all his family and attendance by Abd-us-Samad Cawn, the Suba [Subadar, i.e., Governor] of that province. Some days ago they entered the city laden with fetters, his whole attendants which were left alive being about seven hundred and eighty all severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the city for that purpose, besides about two thousand heads stuck upon poles, being those who died by the sword in battle. He was carried into the presence of the King and from thence to a close prison. He at present has his life prolonged with most of his *Mutsuddys* in the hope to get an account of his treasure in the several parts of his Kingdom, and of those that assisted him, when afterwards he will be executed, for the rest there are 100 each day beheaded. It is not a little remarkable with what patience they undergo thcir fate, and to the last it has not been found that one apostatized from his new formed religion.

This letter was written on March 10, 1716. Executions continued and, on June 9, came the turn of Banda Singh. Hardest torments were reserved for him. His eyes were pulled out and his hands and feet chopped off. His flesh was torn with red-hot pincers. The end came, mercifully for him, with the executioner's axe falling on his neck.

Banda Bahadur

– A Controversial Figure in the Annals of Sikh History*

The performance of Banda Singh Bahadur who brought a revolution in the minds of people that history fails to take notice of has been a subject of heated discussion among historians and writers. Probably no other person has received so much aversion from Persian writers of the day as Banda Singh. The reason is not far to seek.

As a matter of fact, the very objective of Banda Singh was to achieve liberation of the country from the Mughal regime' which was still foreign in most of its essentials. It was, of course, as acrimonious and rigorous as it had been in the days of Guru Nanak who had characterized it as a rule of 'tigers' and 'hounds'. The whole Sikh movement aimed at a national awakening which first released the spirit of the people and then diverting them to political consciousness knit them together to resist tyranny and oppression. The Sixth and the Tenth Gurus had taught their followers to fight in battle and to destroy the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism but their objective being always defensive they had withstood the temptation of acquiring territory, making prisoners or wresting wealth from the enemy. Banda Singh was the first among Sikhs to think of founding a political regime. The idea of a national state, long

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dead, once again became a living aspiration.²

It is evident from the pages of history that Guru Gobind Singh's aim in instituting the *Khalsa* in 1699 was to make assurance double sure or to collate the faith of Guru Nanak and to meet any challenge of interference presented to the Sikh Panth. And for this purpose, he wanted to strengthen the Sikhs and to create in them a sense of self-sacrifice in the defence of their conscience. The use of arms did not necessarily mean a political programme.³ However, to the outsider, Guru Gobind Singh's achievements seemed to be full of danger as it manifested to be inspired by motives of revenge and earthly desires.⁴ Even before 1699, he had participated in battles. In 1688, he had fought against the chiefs of the hill states in the battle of Bhangani.⁵ On his return to Anandpur he had built fortresses. Around 1690, he had personally participated in the Battle of Nadaun against the *faujdar*s of the Mughal Government. In the early 1690, he had strengthened the defences of Anandpur in the face of threatening expeditions, undertaken against him by Mughal commandants. The great gathering at Anandpur in 1699 and the injunction of wearing arms appeared to give an unmistakable proof, if proof was needed, of the political designs of Guru Gobind Singh.⁶ But in fact, the motive in all probability looked to be defensive and socio-cum-religious reform.

Banda Singh was chosen by Guru Gobind Singh to lead the Sikhs at the crucial moments and, of course, he won marvellous victories but the scanty of resources at his disposal and his limitations against a mighty and so far well established Mughal power made his success capricious and short lived. But the diminishing fire was never extinguished that wrought havoc after some decades of Banda Singh's death.

Many a fingers of contradiction and suspicion have been raised on the doings and undoings of Banda Singh which either go a long way to damage his prestige or distort the real history. It goes without saying that Banda Singh became the Guru's slave or *banda* and he is commonly known as such by this name. Banda got instructions in

the tenets of Sikh religion. He is said to have been given new Sikh name Gurbakhash Singh but this name seems to have been unknown before the authorship of *Sikh Religion : Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors* by M. A. Macauliff.⁷ This also seems very strange that Guru Gobind Singh during his first visit to Banda Singh's *dera* was so much inspired with confidence that he in no time assigned him the task of leading the Sikhs in a very delicate and fearful situation. There is a possibility that Guru Gobind Singh might have known him before. Ahmed Shah Batalia 'Zikr-e-Guruan-we-Ibtida-e-Sikhan-wa-Mazhib-e-Eshan' gives the dialogue which took place between Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Singh during the former's visit to the latter's monastery. This dialogue has been taken up by some later writers as authentic without giving any priority to the fact that Ahmed Shah was not giving the last word. Moreover, G.C. Narang in his *Transformation of Sikhism* and some others argue that the Guru enjoined on Banda the five commandments.⁸ Some of those conditions do not seem to be relevant and authentic. For instance not to get married and to lead a life of celibacy is against the Sikh tenets. It is regretted that these five do's and don'ts seem to relate to an unauthentic tell-tale. These dictates are :

Do not approach a women. Lead a life of chastity and celibacy; speak the truth and act on the truth; regard yourself as a servant of the *Khalsa*; not to try to found any sect of his own; not let victories turn his head. That Guru Gobind Singh gave Banda a drum and a banner along with *hukamanamas* in the name of the Sikhs of the Punjab asking them to rally under this banner is also a part of the tradition which seems to be connected with the historical events as they occurred.

The Guru initiated him into the baptism of double-edged sword. Tradition holds that Banda was accompanied by some of the chosen followers of the Guru to assist him. Bawa Binod Singh, Kahan Singh and Baj Singh were among those who accompanied him. There is a version that Banda Singh was not baptized by the Guru for fear of his becoming Guru in future. There seems to be no logic in this argument. Some even argue that it was Guru Gobind Singh himself

who was fighting under the name of Banda Singh Bahadur after proceeding to the Punjab. But Banda Singh's presence in the Punjab and his struggle against the Mughal authority is a living reality and cannot be refuted since the pages of history throw a flood of light on this point. Koer Singh's *Gurbilas* makes a mention that Banda Singh Bahadur got married against the instruction imparted to him about his work and conduct. Since Sikhism is a religion of householders this allegation against Banda Singh is absolutely false. Moreover, Koer Singh himself was not a baptised Sikh and he was a *bairagi sadhu*

Koer Singh Kalāl ut joī
rahe kamboān āngan soī
nām mātrī singh ho bhāī
purab khande pahul nā laī.⁹

Bansavali Nama Dasn Patshahian Da by Kesar Singh Chhibar while describing the attack on Sadhaura by Banda Singh Bahadur gives an unhistorical statement that Banda after burning the town dug out the graves and the dead bodies were put to fire. This statement of Kesar Singh Chhibbar absolutely bears no authentic evidence. In the words of Kesar Singh Chhibbar :

Mār Sadhaurā sād phuk ag lagāī
puttīān kabrand kadha murde dite sadāī¹⁰ :

Another allegation generally levied against Banda Singh Bahadur is that he had some differences with his companions during or after the siege of Gurdas Nagal. Sometimes it is reflected that leaders like Bawa Binod Singh and Kahan Singh separated themselves from Banda Singh Bahadur. As a matter of fact, there was a difference of opinion only about the strategy of warfare and needs not be given undue emphasis because it is likely to hamper the appropriate activities of Banda Singh Bahadur who was a keen devotee of Guru Gobind Singh.

Rattan Singh Bhangu talks about the differences of Banda Singh Bahadur with his companions which really relate to the time after his death. Banda Singh's work, conduct and career do not reflect

any discord, split, or schism. His letters depict that he never assumed the title of Guru and very much liked to be called *banda* or the slave of Guru Gobind Singh. Kesar Singh Chhibbar clearly states that Banda Singh insisted upon his follower's to stick to what Guru Gobind Singh ordained. Rattan Singh Bhangu's *Prachin Panth Prakash* needs not be taken seriously on account of various reasons and primarily because of its secondary nature.¹¹

The pages of history give us a solid evidence, if any such evidence is required, that Banda Singh and the *Khalsa* struggled hard to oust the Mughal regime and the concoction that Mata Sundariji, the wife of Guru Gobind Singh ever wished the *Khalsa* to leave Banda Singh in the lurch is baseless. It goes without saying that Banda Singh implied hard and harsh methods but that was solely done to eliminate the oppression of the Mughals. Tyranny committed by the Mughals on the oppressed was of crucial nature so far as its intensity was concerned.

Giani Gian Singh, the author of *Panth Parkash* or *Tawarikh-e-Khalsa* also has not been able to do justice with Banda Singh Bahadur as he has taken abundance of material from *Prachin Panth Prakash* of Rattan Singh Bhangu. Moreover, he being a *Nirmala* remained struck to his faith while dealing with Banda as disciple of Guru Gobind Singh.

Some writers like Karam Singh Historian do not consider Banda Singh a baptized Sikh. Though there is no clear-cut evidence of Banda Singh Bahadur having been administered *pahul* by Guru Gobind Singh yet there seems to be no ethics in the thinking that he fought for the *Khalsa* upto the last breath and breathed his last after suffering severe persecution along with his child and wife without adhering to the principles of the warlike *Khalsa*.

It goes without saying that Banda Singh Bahadur was not the enemy of Islam but a dead enemy of tyranny and oppression. Moreover, he had employed Muslims in his army bestowing full confidence on them. They could easily adhere to their own religious doctrines. There was no restriction on *nimaz* or *khutba*. The Muslims

were offered due wages. *Akhbar-i-Dabad-i-Mualla* (Jaipur) [a fragment, undated quoted by Teja Singh Ganda Singh (*A Short History of the Sikhs* p -99)] reveal that 5000 Mohamedans enlisted themselves in Banda Singh's army and according to another report this number went on increasing daily.

It is quite in the fitness of the things to delineate the marvellous achievement of Banda Singh Bahadur in terms of abolition of the *zaminadari* system. The feudal land lords of those days who were mostly close to the Mughal authorities and paid fix revenue were the proprietors of the land. They were ousted from their real position and the cultivators of the land were made the real owners. This ended by tyranny of the land lords who were free to charge any amount of revenue from the peasants. So Banda Singh greatest achievement who made the tillers of the land its masters helped him to gain considerable popularity.

A bibliography giving an account of one of the useful works on Banda Singh Bahadur reads 'Sayyed Muhammad Qasim Lahori's *Ibrat Nama* contains a detailed account of Banda Singh Bahadur and his companions. The expedition of Muhammad Aslam Khan, the advance of Haidari Flag, the battle of Qila Bhagwant Rai and Kotla Begam, the raids of Rustam Dil Khan and Muhammad Amin Khan and the siege of Gurdaspur (Gurdas Nangal) by Abd-us-Samad Khan have been narrated at great length. The author was present at the last siege in the detachment of Naib Araf Beg and was an eye witness to the dispatch of Banda Singh and his companions to Delhi under the escort of Zakariya Khan and Muhammad Amin Khan.¹²

Last but not the least Banda Singh Bahadur's achievements have always remained under the shadow on account of reasons more than one. In the words of a modern historian: 'In Indian history he (Banda) occupies the place of a genius spiritual, political and

military, consecrated or perverted as one might thing.¹¹³ In the world history he should be considered as the greatest figure of the times.

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5. *Bachittar Natak*, chapter - 8. Whereas Ganda Singh in his introduction to *Sri Gur Sobha*, *op. cit.* gives a stipulated date... 18th sept. 1688 of this battle, H. R. Gupta in his *History of Sikh Gurus*, 1973, pp. 153, 165 argues that the month was October although he shows his agreement with the year of the battle. Historians and writers, however, differ with regard to the year of the battle.
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7. Ganda Singh, *Sikh Itihas Bare*, Lahore, 1946, pp. 56-69
8. Gokal Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, 1960, p. 100; James Brown (London 1788) 'History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks', *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs* (edited annotated by Ganda Singh) (reprint Indian Studies, p.28 states : 'One Bunde, had been for many years the intimate friend of Gooroo Gobind; and hearing of the destruction of his defenseless family, he gave way to the deepest impressions of grief and resentment, which at length settled into a fixed determination to seek revenge...' George Forster (1798) in his *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Vol.-1, 1970 (reprint), Patiala, p. 303 states : 'A Sicque disciple, named Bunda, who had attended Govind Singh to Deccan, came, after the death of his chief, into the Punjab; where, claiming a merit from his late connection, he raised a small force...',
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Banda SINGH Bahadur and Sikh Sovereignty

Surinder Singh*

Banda Singh Bahadur had a fairly short span of life from 27th October 1670 to 20th June 1716. Guru Gobind Singh while at Nander came to his dera to meet him in September 1708 and, when the two met, in the very first acquaintance some sort of a magnetic attraction took place between the two and Banda Bahadur became disciple of Guru Gobind Singh as if he had achieved his aim of life and met his master.*

The third phase of Banda's life commenced from October 1708 to June 1716 less than 8 years in which he spearheaded the great movement of the Sikhs which contributed to the establishment of a great Sikh kingdom in the north-western India over the downfall of Mughal Empire. It is a great irony that historians of various hues - Islamic, Sikhs and British - have not done justice to the great hero and have fictionalized his achievements to such an extent that the truth is entangled in a mire of conflicting accounts devoid of any authentic evidence and catering to the whims and fancies of the writers and not to the deeds of the great man.

The history of this phase of Banda Bahadur's activities from 1708 to 1716 can also be divided into there distinct sections.

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First Section

The first section is the socio-political history of this period. This is a portion about which numerous historians have written, each giving new facts which are self-contradictory and not supported by any authentic or contemporary evidence. In fact, to glean out the true history has become very difficult at this stage. Almost all the historians' accounts deal with this aspect and very little about the succeeding sections.

Islamic writers have mentioned about Banda Bahadur while writing the history of their own rulers. The Mughal rulers and their officials had a developed culture, financial stability and a way of life as the rulers of India. When the Sikhs rose against those rulers for the protection of their faith and their people and were able to beat them, created some sort of a contempt in the high-bred rulers for the ill-equipped and untrained Sikh devotees who were able at times to hold on their own against them. In various accounts there are contemptuous names like dogs, brutes for the Sikhs, no matter how great might be their achievement. The non-Muslim writers brought all sorts of imaginary stories either in praise or against Banda Bahadur, especially those who wrote long after the death of Banda Bahadur and to find out the truth becomes almost impossible. British writers have also leaned on the side of the Islamic writers and have shown their own bias towards the Sikhs. A few of the major events of the life of Banda Bahadur from 1708 to 1716 are being briefly mentioned to show the sad state of affairs of the historical accounts each contradicting the other and neither giving any authentic or contemporary evidence in support thereof.

1. In the meeting between Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur at latter's dera, Guru is said to have ordered killing of Banda's goats for a feast for his Sikhs and himself having sat on the cot meant for the Banda seems to be some sort of concoction and does not fit with the character of the Guru in general.
2. Historians are divided over whether Banda was initiated into the Khalsa or not by Guru Gobind Singh. The word 'Singh'

with Banda also seems to have been added at a later date. Guru Gobind Singh having instructed Banda to remain chaste and not to live a normal life of a householder, a matter dear to all the Gurus in their preaching is against the Sikh ethos and also without any evidence.

3. It is recorded that a grand darbar was held at Nander by Guru Gobind Singh in which Banda Bahadur along with his advisors and a few troops was sent with quite a fanfare. This is contrary to the view that Banda left surreptitiously without the imperial army getting to know of it. It took him almost one year to reach Panjab, which otherwise would take 3-4 months. Accounts also differ as to whether Banda left before or after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. Khafi Khan and other Muslim news writers have stated that Sikhs carried out worst atrocities on the innocent public, exhumed the dead, torn open the wombs of the pregnant women, dashed every living child on the ground and desecrated mosques and tombs after the capture of Sirhind. These and such like other stories are incorrect as most of the tombs and mosques built during 14th century onwards are still standing intact without any damage done to them.
4. Battle of Sadhaura began on 4th December 1710. Khafi Khan states that it is impossible for him to describe the fight that followed. Sikhs in their faqir dress struck terror into the royal troops. The number of dead or dying of the imperialists was so large that for a time it seemed that they were losing ground. On 9th December, the emperor set up his camp on Som nadi within sight of Lohgarh. On 10th December, some imperial troops marched to the foot of the Daber hills on which the Lohgarh fort is located and laid siege of Lohgarh fort. On 10th night and early morning of 11th December, Banda Bahadur and his army left Lohgarh and moved into the dense forest and the siege of Lohgarh lasted hardly 2-3 days. Banda Bahadur had about 30 to 40 thousand ill-equipped and trained volunteers. The emperor Bahadur Shah's army was about 1 -

1½ lacs trained soldiers. The four governors of the surrounding areas in attendance on the emperor had their own armies and various zamindars in this rich basin of Jamuna had their own zat and swars had joined the imperial army in large numbers. Banda Bahadur, when his about 30 to 40 thousand Sikhs were facing about 3 lacs strong Mughal army and it was not that he surreptitiously ran away, but it was a tactical withdrawal to withdraw his forces where it was literally impossible to fight them out.

5. Mughal court newswriters and later historians have written that Sikhs in Lohgarh fort had no stores of food and fodder. From the top of the fort they bargained with signs of their language and eyes with the grain dealers of the royal army and bought what they could from them at 2-3 rupees a seer of grain. Many of the besieged died of starvation. In view of actual period of siege being only 2-3 days, the further account is apparently fanciful and fabricated.
6. Numerous historians have written that one Ghulab Singh, a Hindu convert, Bakshi of the Sikh forces offered to sacrifice his life for the good of his religion, dressed himself in the garments of Banda Singh and seated himself in his place to give an impression to the Mughal forces camped at Som nadi that Banda himself is sitting there. The topography of the remains of the Lohgarh and Som nadi clearly establish that this story is absolute fiction as the fort when it was complete was not visible from Som nadi as the forest all around is so dense even today no building can be seen even at 50 yards what to say of Som nadi more than a kilometre away.
7. The differences between Mata Sundri and Banda Singh Bahadur have no evidence and historians have delved thereon in accordance with their whims and fancies. After Banda Singh Bahadur's execution his wife is stated by some to have embraced Islam and by others to have committed suicide. The family of Banda Singh Bahadur which is said to be from is

second wife maintaining the dera is also being disputed by some modern historians without any evidence.

Second Section

The second section is regarding the military strategy adopted by Banda Singh Bahadur in his wars with the Mughal imperial army from 1710-1716. This, in fact, is a golden period of the Sikh struggle after the span of Sikh gurus. Banda Singh Bahadur made Sikhs realize that they can rule their country one day and the seed sown by him ripened and flourished during the next half century of Misl period by which time the Sikhs occupied the capital city of Lahore in 1765 by pushing both the Mughals and the Afghans out of Panjab for all times to come.

Banda was well aware of his inability to face with his untrained volunteers a trained Mughal army of 2-3 lacs strength. So he devised his own war strategy and the method of facing the Mughals. He very carefully implemented the strategy for four years by fighting with them in Sadhaura-Lohgarh axis and escaping into the dense forests to regroup and fight again. These military strategies of Banda Singh Bahadur and his wars are to be examined analytically keeping in view the topography of the area and other natural features from which he took support and was able to thwart the Mughals to capture him alive or dead. Bahadur Shah was so exasperated in 1710 that he is stated to have once said to his prime minister and commanders that "so many wild dogs could not catch a jackal." The Banda Singh Bahadur's wars have to be compared with similar wars fought by forceful commanders like him with very large armies in China, Central Asia and Europe. The Banda Bahadur's war tactics were adopted by the Sikh Misls in fighting with the Mughals and the Afghans. These aspects have not been examined by the historians so far and a modest attempt is being made by the author in this regard.

Third Section

The third section deals with the concept of Sikh sovereignty and role of Banda Bahadur in setting up the initial Sikh state on those guidelines.

Sovereignty has been defined as final and absolute political authority in a political community within a certain territory.

.....Hinslay.

Guru Nanak's insistence on self-reliance, the institution of *sangat*, *pangat* and *langar*, the earning with one's own hands and sharing with others laid the foundations of a strong and mature social order, to which contributions were made by successor Gurus. By early 17th century, a state peaceful and unobtrusive had been slowly evolved and Sikhs had become accustomed to a form of self-government under their Padshahs within the state of Mughal empire. Akbar's non-interference with Sikh religious affairs, in fact, his indulgence, had greatly contributed to the maturing of the Sikh social order. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan in 1606 and that of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675 gave great impetus to the urge among the Sikhs to rule their own destiny and no longer suffer the brutality and torture of the later Mughal emperors. Guru Gobind Singh aware of the situation and attitude of the emperor Aurangzeb came to the conclusion that where it is bad to tyrannize, it is worse to bear tyranny. He therefore took away every possible means to defend his faith with his meagre resources against the mightiest kingdom. He created marshal literature from Hindu classics to raise the spirit of a soldier to a higher level to that of an ordinary paid soldier. He created the Khalsa to further enhance the level of spirit and endurance in his men to face the might of the Mughal armies. Guru Gobind Singh also laid down the principle of revolution in his letter (Zafarnama) to Aurangzeb :

Chun Kar Uz Hama Healtay Dar Gazsht

Halal uz Buzdan Ba Shamshir Dast

Meaning that when all other measures fail to correct the ruler, it is permissible to take up the sword and smite the tyrant, a principle which was as yet developed for next two centuries in the Western world.

Guru Gobind Singh at the time of his demise abolished the living Guruship and placed the spiritual sovereignty in the Guru Granth, very expressively explained in :

*Agya Bhai Akal Ki Tabhi Chalayo Panth**Sab Sikhan Ko Hukm Hai Guru Manyo Granth*

Meaning that with the order of the God Almighty the Sikh Panth has been established and all Sikhs are ordered that they should consider their Granth as their spiritual Guru and in all their spiritual problems they should read, understand and follow the holy Granth. He placed his temporal sovereignty in the Khalsa and expressed that wherever there are five Khalsas, he is present in spirit amongst them. This is the most democratic system of carrying out any administration. The Sikhs were so devoted to the Gurus that they did not accept the temporal sovereignty as such. Their wishes are expressed in the daily salutation "*Wahe Guru ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh,*" meaning Khalsa belongs to the Guru and hence all victory belongs to the Guru. These are the cardinal principles of Sikh sovereignty laid by the Gurus and accepted by the Sikhs. This is a rare example of a prophet laying down the principles on which the society in the state is to be run by his disciples after his demise.

Banda Bahadur came to Panjab and started collecting Sikhs and motivating them to secure back the lost territories. Banda Bahadur conquered Sirhind in May 1710 and continued conquering surrounding areas. When the question arose of setting up the administration of the conquered territories, he appointed his own governors and established his own chowkis. The account of a newswriter in Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla gives the first indication about Banda Bahadur's implementation of the Sikh concept of sovereignty in the initial Sikh state.

"The Khalsa Sikhs have strange practices amongst themselves. They call one person as an army. In their despatches they write that an army of Sikhs has arrived. Some say they have struck coins and in their Hukamnamas the year Ahaad is written. In the villages the produce divided between them and the tillers of the land, two parts to the tiller and one to them. The lands have been given to the tillers. They want all this to be known to the emperor. Elephants, cash and grains of Wazir Khan of Sirhind have fallen in their hands in large quantities. They have made their own mohar (seal).

Not only they have given the lands to the tillers, they want it to be known to the emperor so that he also comes to know the formation of the initial Sikh state.

In fact Banda Bahadur had set up a wooden pillar at Thanesar informing Bahadur Shah that beyond this pillar, the territory belongs to the Khalsa and he should not enter.

Banda Bahadur got a state seal made with the legend: "*Degh Tegh Fateh O' Nusrat Baidrang, Yaft Uz Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*", meaning that the Degh, free Langar (economic power), Tegh (the sword), Fateh (the resultant victory) have been received from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. The recipient of all these blessings is the Sikh community who has made the seal for running the Government of their State.

Banda Bahadur is also stated to have struck a coin with the legend : *Uzmat-i-Nanak Guru Ham Zahir O' Ham Batan ast, Badshah Din-O-Duniya Aap Sacha Sahib ast.*"

It appears that the Sikhs wanted the coin to be in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh also and hence this legend was dropped. Legend on the coin which was selected next has been on the Sikh coins :

*"Sikka Zad bar har do alam, tegh-i-Nanak Wahib ast,
Fateh Gobind Shah-i-Shahan Fazl Sacha Sahib Ast"*.

Meaning coin has been struck in both the worlds under the guarantee of Guru Nanak's sword, victory of Guru Gobind Singh, king of kings, has been with the grace of God Almighty.

Two years later, some Sikhs again pointed out that the word "Gobind" is not correct, it should be "Gobind Singh". In the third year coin the word "Gobind Singh" is placed on the coin. On the reverse is written:

*"Zarb ba aman al dahr, Masawarat Shahr Zinat
al takht khalsa mubarak bakht"*.

Meaning that minted at the place of perfect peace, picture of a beautiful city where the fortunate throne of the Khalsa is located. This legend gives the clear indication that Banda Singh Bahadur did

not make his capital at the small fortress of Lohgarh. In fact, he had no capital city and he had expressed on the coin what sort of capital he wanted, i.e., a place of perfect peace, picture of a beautiful city where the fortunate throne of the Khalsa should be located. What is recorded on the coin is the most authentic record of those times. No historian has compared that ideas of his capital city with perfect peace and picture of a beautiful city are being satisfied by the small fortress on a hill and they have kept on saying that he set up his capital at Lohgarh. This aspect of Banda Singh Bahadur's achievement has not been explained in detail by any Sikh historian except by the author in his book "Sikh Coinage: Symbol of Sikh Sovereignty".

* * * * *

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur

Bhai Ashok Singh Bagrian*

Banda Singh Bahadur is not 'A Person who has gone through a life of a hunter, a Bairagi and then to a Sikh'.

It is a transformation of moral character under taken by Guru Nanak. Banda Singh Bahadur is a character created over 200 years of Sikh Guru's moral revolution starting with Guru Nanak and reaching its zenith on Baisakhi 1699 culminating into Bahadur Banda.

Creation of Khalsa cannot be ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh (alone). Students of history would know that the places from where the Sangat came to Anandpur Sahib in 1699 specially the places from where the Five Pyaras came were never visited by Guru Gobind Singh. These were the places where 'Adi Guru' Guru Nanak preached the self respecting philosophy of Sikhism with an invitation to join his movement of moral resurrection carrying a warning, and a condition.

It was the same challenge enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh when he asks for *Sikhs* in 1699.

Guru Nanak's birthday in *Katak* is the time of sowing and *Vaisakhi* is when you reap the crop sown in Katak. So is Khalsa born on Baisakhi.

* 1557, Sector 36-D, Chandigarh.

Down the line in development of our character and morality one must study how this character of Banda Singh Bahadur, personified by Banda Bairagi transformed into Gurbakhsh Singh (Guru-Bakhsh).

Here in this developmental stage let us see the symbolic transformation.

A Bairagi, a renunciate imbecile when blessed by Guru becomes Guru-Bakhsh and attains the mentle of a Bahadur Banda. This development is a revolution in human morality, character of the time when Guru Nanak had started his mission, in a morally bankrupt human society.

The situation prevailing at that time cannot be better stated than what we find in his *babar bani* and later in *Sahib-e-Kamaal : Guru Gobind Singh* by Daulat Rai.

It is this spirit that fires one to stand against oppression and fight. Injustice, can still be found (though in traces) in Sikhs today. The heroic, death defying, deeds in discharge of one duty can be remembered in Saga of Saragarhi, Galipoli (Italy) and now little known when in Kargil (J & K) 22 Sikhs out of 27 from 8th Sikh regiment were killed in initial half an hour barrage.

In the revolutions of other parts the world then and later we note that, it has been only economic disparity, exploitation. Down trodden against the barbaric lords. But Sikh movement had many more challenges. These were economic, social, religious, caste, political and worse the domination, stranglehold of priesthood in the society.

Demonstrating he goes to Bhai Lalo, low caste then, a *dalit* in modern terminology refusing the invitation of Malik Bhago. It was a social Challenge which became a keynote of his revolution, reform.

Culmination we find in 1699 when all the five piaras came from the 'exploited' section of the then society dominated, controlled, exploited by both Mullah and the Brahman. Taking Amrit from the same 'Bata' bowl was the demolition of Brahminic concept of society based upon caste system.

This step a leap forward by the Sikh Gurus finds an echo/a reference in a British Intelligence officer's report in 1911, which need deep careful study by the Sikhs who wish to protect their ideological identity from submerging into the saline ocean of Hindu culture/ethos, known as great assimilator of caste and creed :

“Hinduism has always been hostile to Sikhism whose Guru powerfully and successfully attacked the Principle of Caste which is the foundation on which the whole fabric of Brahmanism has been reared. The activities of Hindus have, therefore, been constantly directed to the undermining of Sikhism both by preventing the children of Sikh father's from taking Pahul and by reducing professed Sikhs from their allegiance of their faith. Hinduism has strangled Buddhism, once a formidable rival to it and it has already made serious inroads into the domain of Sikhism.”

Banda Singh Bahadur's struggle/ fight against the tyranny of the rulers needs a deep study. Banda Singh who is baptized in late 1708 into Khalsa order shows a remarkable quality and character of an experienced army General. Who has to his credit the sack of Sirhind, one of the most important and powerful suba of the Mughal empire. How was he able to gather such army and galvanize them into skilful fighters. In less than 2 years time (September 1708 to May 1710) he reaches Chappar Chiri, between now Landran and Mohali for a final assault against nawab Wazir Khan a formidable Governor of the time.

It was not a peaceful march but a route full of battles here and there. Notable being Saharanpur, Sadhaura, Samana etc.

By that time (1710) he was joined by the Malwai Sikhs headed by Bhai Fateh Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Karam Singh (*Banda Singh Bahadur*, by Dr. Ganda Singh, 1935) (Bhai Dharam Singh and Karam Singh s/o Bhai Rup Chand were my ancestors). Bhai Dharam Singh had accompanied Guru Gobind Singh from Dina Kangar after Baptism right upto Nanded. A point to note here is that Malwa Sikhs were not involved in any of the previous battle!!

Some time back a scholar at this University questioned us to why Banda Singh Bahadur by passed Delhi. A strategic move to avoid a

powerful army which could abort his mission to Sirhind, had been immaturely questioned.

“The struggle of the Sikhs, against the intolerance and iniquities of the Mughal rulers has been erroneously interpreted into a religious campaign of the Sikhs against the religion of Islam, or into a rebellion of the 'Kufaar' against the rule of the Momins”, Dr Ganda Singh.

If this fight of oppressed against the oppressor, if victim against tyranny is given a communal or religious color then fight for India's freedom would be against Christianity and what has been perpetrated upon the Sikhs in 80s and 90s would be construed as doing of Hindus not the Govt. of the time.

It is there that after the sack of Sirhind some Hindus were also taken to task by Banda Singh Bahadur. On their remonstrations of being innocent, they were told that they were silent spectators (thus abettors) to the crime perpetrated on Sahibzadas.

When we analyse the situation prevailing at the time dispassionately, we find a good number Muslims could be there in Banda Singh Bahadur's army. Guru Gobind Singh's close associations with Bahadur Shah and that of Suba Lahore, Manyum Khan would safely let us imagine a presence of a good number of Sikhs in Bahadur Shah's army, who could have or must have joined Banda Singh Bahadur after attack on Guru Gobind Singh's life.

Guru Sahib's *Hukamnama* addressed to Sangat of Sahazada Azim-ud-Din (*Hukamname, Guru Sahiban, Mata Sahiban, Banda Singh and Khalsaji*, by Dr. Ganda Singh) is a clear indication to the presence of the Sikhs in Sahazada Azim-ud-Din later Bahadur Shah's army retinue.

The most remarkable achievement of Banda Singh Bahadur was the giving propriety rights of land to the tillers. Nothing stress short of social revolution. ਨੀਚੇ ਉਚ ਕਰੇ ਮੇਰਾ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ was put to practice. That is how persons belonging to the then lower caste were able to establish their Misals in due course of time. This was something we find had not been achieved in French or Russian revolutions.

The stoic fortitude with which he faced his execution is a tribute to his faith in his Guru. Guru Gobind Singh, it seems, knowingly got all

the four sons killed - but he was Guru. Banda Singh Bahadur proved himself to be *Tera Banda*.

Men like Itmad-ud-Daula Md Amin (was) all praise for him for "so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct." Dr. Ganda Singh.

Just before his execution, a Kazi asked him that the fortitude with which you are facing such torture show that you are man of faith in God. Being so why he perpetrated such atrocities during his fights. He is reported, to have replied that when the then rulers became atrocious and barbaric God sent him (Banda) to punish them. Now that he had fulfilled the directions of his Gurus, He has handed me over to them. No regrets.

Banda Singh Bahadur's life, personality and struggle should not be studied in a personal or in isolate manner. Its nature, character and behaviour and commitment to God through Guru that should be analysed studied for guidance to the building of Sikh character.

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Banda Singh Bahadur : A Moral Crusader

Jashandeep Singh Sandhu*

Banda Singh Bahadur is seen by various historians, from time to time as a distinguished military General or a master strategist who achieved success in a very short time. To me the aspect of his life which needs much attention is that he was a 'rebel' with a cause. All his military genius and strategies were means to achieve an end. The end or the aspect which I would like to bring forth is that he was "A protector of civil liberties and crusader for restoration of human rights".

Basically, What are the human rights? Human Rights are those rights which inhere in every human being by virtue of being a member of the human family. These are nothing but what had been traditionally known as "natural rights"- Rights bestowed upon human beings by nature. "Human rights" are based on mankind's increasing demand for a decent civilized life in which the inherent dignity of each human being is well respected and protected. Human rights are fundamental to our very existence without which we cannot live as human beings.

Banda Singh Bahadur was a crusader who launched a valiant crusade against the unjust and tyrannical rule of the Mughals. The Mughal rule, which was established by Babar, in 1526 was fully entrenched and all encompassing by the time of the reign of Aurangzeb. Mughal rule was basically a 'theocratic state' where all the daily

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proceedings were reduced to what was written in '*Koran*.' It was driven by '*Shara*' principles where 90% of the population was subjected to all sorts of persecutions. Banda Singh Bahadur as the protector of civil liberties wished that the large populace should not submit to the hegemonistic policies of the Mughals. It was not an easy task to begin with. He had to instil confidence and infuse courage in the benumbed and repressed humanity and stoke combativeness in the downtrodden classes so that they take up cudgels against the oppression and suppression unleashed by the Mughals.

Banda Singh Bahadur believed that the Mughals, especially Wazir Khan and other Mughal perpetrators should be paid back in the same coin. His actions and policies were based upon the dictum "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." His aim was the emancipation of the persecuted and the downtrodden. While doing so his campaign should not be undermined as including peasants only. Commenting on Banda Bahadur, Khushwant Singh has mentioned that there was an agrarian uprising because of the peasant upsurge in the Eastern Punjab.¹ Khushwant Singh has erroneously presented the crusade launched by Banda Singh Bahadur as a peasant uprising whereas the Sikh Movement launched by Banda had a firm social base among the Zamindars, the peasantry and the lower classes. It is amply clear that the Zamindars were the principal source of strength to Banda Singh Bahadur. And if the social composition of the Zamindars is studied, we can say that Banda Singh led predominantly the uprisings of the *Jat* Zamindars.² It is also to be noted that the Jats were the largest Zamindar castes in the *parganas* where Banda Singh had support.

The *Jat* Zamindars in order to obtain social legitimacy equivalent to their economic status, the *Khatris* who had traditionally been the followers of Guru Nanak (*Nanak Parasts*) because all the Sikh Gurus came from them, joined the ranks of Banda Singh Bahadur. Apart from *Khatris*, a very large number of other lowly placed and nondescript communities joined him.³

His crusade was purely secular and should not be treated as a sectarian movement. Muzaffar Alam mentions that Banda tried to give his struggle the colour of a *dharma yudha* (holy war) to protect the

Hindu interests against Muslim tyranny. The participation of the lowest of the low sections such as the untouchables, the so called sweepers and pariahs highlighted the egalitarian character of the social structure of the Sikh religion.

William Irvine has mentioned in his book, 'A low scavenger or leather dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru (referring to Banda Singh), when in a short time he would return to the birth place as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand'⁴

This proves that the people from low castes or lower sections of society were given representations and raised to responsible positions. The rulership implied primarily the right of revenue collection in that particular area which hitherto were enjoyed by intermediaries and Mughal *amils*.

Another factor which proves that Banda Singh Bahadur never wanted to play divisive politics by creating a wedge between Hindus and Muslims is that even the *Rajputs*, *Gujars* and high placed Hindu nobles in Imperial court openly rebuffed the overtures of Banda Singh Bahadur. Had he waged a '*Dharam Yudha*', then the Hindus and particularly the *Khatris* of Punjab would not have alienated themselves from Banda Singh's campaign towards the end of his struggle. Banda Singh had a large number of followers and sympathizers among the lower Mughal officials and among the associates and retainers of the nobles.⁵

The one major step taken by Banda Singh Bahadur in guaranteeing the civil liberties to the common people was the audacious attempt of the *total abolition of the Zamindari System of the Mughals*. Under the Zamindari System, the Zamindars or landlords were appointed by the state. The Zamindars used to submit the fixed revenue accruing in a particular area in the state exchequer. The State was not to intervene in the internal matters of the Zamindars, as to how much or on what basis they realised their exactions from the actual cultivators of land, who were particularly reduced to the position of mere slaves. The Sikhs, primarily from the agricultural class knew this problem well. So, when Banda Singh came to power this step of abolition was taken. With this step the actual cultivators of the soil became the proprietors of their

holdings and a detestable system i.e. Zamindari System was discontinued from the land of the five rivers. After Banda Singh, this reform was further carried forward and strengthened during the time of *Sikh Misals* and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Punjab thus became the land of peasant-proprietors. Peasants when they became proprietors naturally had more interest in developing the land further to reap the maximum benefits. This resulted in the overall prosperity of the Punjabi peasants today with respect to his counterparts in other states.

Guru Gobind Singh had ordained Banda Singh Bahadur to go to Punjab and entrusted to him the noble task of continuing the war against the tyrannies and oppressions of his time. Khushwant Singh is wrong when he writes that the Guru had specifically restricted Banda Singh Bahadur's "role to that of military commander of a punitive expedition."⁶ Whereas in the honest execution of his given duty of continuing the war against Mughal oppressions, Banda Singh, of course, punished the wrong-doers for the cold-blooded murders of Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh.

Banda Singh Bahadur's campaign was directed against the evil and the wrong doers and not against the innocent civilians. With this objective in mind, the condemned city of Sirhind was spared from the total rout. The mausoleum of Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi (*Mujaddid Alif Sani*), the most magnificent of all such buildings wrote Dr. G.C. Narang in 1912, "still stands as it did before the battle and is, I think, sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement, which nevertheless is corroborated by Khafi Khan".⁷ Similarly, Banda Bahaḍur had no intention to destroy Malerkotla, he only wanted to give decent burial to Bibi Anup Kaur.

Considering the limitations of a human being and exigencies of the contemporary times, we can say that Banda Singh Bahadur was able to achieve much what he had set out for himself. He was probably the first person who almost single handedly took on the might of well entrenched Mughal Empire and shook it to its very foundations.

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Modern Historians

On Banda Singh Bahadur :

An Analysis of Muzafar Alam's Study

Prof. Shiv Kumar Gupta*

Banda Singh Bahadur, a versatile personality of the eighteenth century India, remains one of the most enigmatic and hence fascinating character in Sikh History. He aroused the dormant energies of the oppressed people groaning under the agony of pain. By his constant struggle and sacrifices, he filled hearts of the downtrodden, oppressed and suppressed poor of India with a lofty longing for socio-economic and political freedom. There is another perception based on the writings of some contemporary Persian writers, who have painted Banda Singh in "Blackest Colours", called him 'blood-thirsty', 'savage'. Every act of cruelty which their fertile imagination could invent has been ascribed to him.

Scholars have put forward their views on varied aspects of Banda Singh Bahadur's personality. Here is an attempt to make a historiographical analysis of Muzaffar Alam's study "*Sikh uprising under Banda Bahadur, 1708-1715*", which he brings out in detail in his "*The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India - Awadh and Punjab, 1707-1748*." Herein Muzaffar Alam makes a critical analysis about the social

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base of Sikh rising under Banda Bahadur with particular reference to the role of Zamindars, peasantry and the trading communities.

The period from 1709 to 1716 marks the meteoric rise and fall of Banda Singh Bahadur during whose time for the first time, "unrest in Punjab took the form of a full fledged rebellion".²

This period witnessed the first Sikh attempt to carve out an independent State. Obviously, says Fauja Singh, "Banda mapped out a course of action different from that of Guru Hargobind and Gobind Singh. To achieve political object, Banda Singh Bahadur needed a bold and positive plan of fighting for the defensive strategy of Guru period was no more adequate. The way in which Banda Singh planned his operations speaks highly of his genius."³

Muzaffar Alam dwells at length how "a major failure of Mughals in region lay in their inability to cope with Sikh question."⁴ According to him, "The Sikh Movement under Banda Singh had a strong social base among the Zamindars, peasantry and lower classes."⁵

The movement, however, was not free from weaknesses, which in part became responsible for its failure in 1715. It appears that Banda Bahadur drew principal strength from the support of the Zamindars. "The Zamindars in Punjab like most of their counterparts of Mughal empire, had taken to armed resistance against Mughal authority during the last phase of Aurengzeb's reign".⁶ Hence, when Banda Singh entered Punjab, "The Zamindars promptly put their trust in him and accepted him as their leader. At their instance, hundreds of others collected around Banda and in all directions the Sikhs were apprised of his appearance. During the entire period of their struggle against the Mughals, the Sikhs of Banda Bahadur could move almost unchecked in northern districts of the Bari Doab".⁷

Second important region where Banda Singh had a strong following lay on the South-Eastern border of Punjab, in Chakla Sirhind of Suba Delhi. Since Banda Singh did not meet much resistance here, he was encouraged to make it the base of his operations. Muzaffar Alam brings out how "In times of extreme need, when the Sikhs escaped into the hills, Banda Singh could depend on Chakla of Sirhind for supply of provisions for his army".⁸

But that does not mean that all the Zamindars stood to support Banda Singh. According to Muzaffar Alam, "In some areas beyond the territory of Punjab, the Zamindars refused to cooperate with Banda, notwithstanding their own disputes with Mughal authorities."⁹ In this connection Muzaffar Alam cites example of the Zamindars of Saharanpur who supported Mughals in their bid to drive Sikhs out of the region.

The following of Banda was primarily amongst the village level Zamindars. The higher Zamindars joined him because of their caste and religion affinity and certainly with a hope to expand their zamindaris. Within a period of a year or so strength of his army increased from four to five thousand cavalry and from seven to eight thousand foot soldiers to thirty to forty thousands.¹⁰

It would be wrong to completely identify the Sikhs of Banda Singh with only Jat Zamindars and peasants. Muzaffar Alam brings out that "Apart from Khatris, who had traditionally been the followers of Guru Nanak, a very large number of other lowly placed and non-descript communities joined him".¹¹

"The rebellion of early eighteenth century was also an expression of anger by lower classes. The rejection of caste differentiation by Guru had attracted a very large number of low caste followers. While challenging established social hierarchy, Sikhs under Banda Singh welcomed every section of society in their ranks. Those who chose to join them frequently belonged to lower social orders".¹²

"The scavengers, leather-dressers and other low-born had only to leave their homes and join Sikh leaders who in a short time they would return to their birthplace as its rulers."¹³

According to Muzaffar Alam "This rulership obviously implied primarily the right to collect the revenue which was earstwhile under the jurisdiction of intermediaries and the Mughal amils." Banda Singh had appointed his own *amils* and *thanedars* or issued orders to the Mughal officials and Jagridars to submit and give up their claims to these territories.¹⁵ "The participation of these communities lower down in social order highlighted the egalitarian character of the social structure of Sikh religion".¹⁶

If on one hand the Sikh movement under Banda attracted to its fold lower strata of the society, "it signified a protest against the beneficiaries of the existing structure of authority", on the other hand the *Madad-i-Ma'ash* holders therefore also suffered heavily at the hands of Sikhs. Hence they lent support to the imperial army in their bid to suppress Sikhs".¹⁷

Muzaffar Alam brings out in detail how the movement under Banda Singh also suffered from certain weaknesses. "The movement's principal support from Jat-Sikh Zamindars, gradually alienated it from the Non-Sikh, Non-Jat Zamindars as also from certain urban communities including the Khatri, who were otherwise still the followers of Guru Nanak."¹⁸ Moreover, Banda Singh could not coordinate his movement with other anti-Mughal uprisings in the region. He could have contacted "the rebel Zamindars of Rachna Doab and Sindh-Sagar, Gujar uprisings in Sarkar Saharanpur." On the contrary some Zamindars of Saharanpur supported the Mughals in latter's bid to drive the Sikhs out of the region.

Khafi Khan narrates how at a critical juncture in 1710, when Mughals were laying siege to Sikh bases in the hills of Lohgarh, the traders of the imperial army seem to have attempted to maintain a supply of provisions in the fort.¹⁹ In the same battle, one Gulab Singh, is reported to have passed himself off as Banda in order to facilitate the Sikh leader's escape."²⁰

According to Khushwant Singh, the movement under Banda Singh "had the active support of very majority of Punjabi Hindus who joined it in large numbers and for a time gave the resemblance of Hindu resistance. But soon Khatri started against the onslaught of Islam."²¹ Some Hindu *Faquirs*, *Yogis*, *Sanyasis* and *Bairagis* actively responded to the cause of Banda Singh Bahadur by working as spies in Imperial camp and then conveying news to Banda Singh Bahadur about moves of imperialists before hand.²²

According to Muzaffar Alam, "A factor which created and widened the gap between Khatri and Sikhs of Banda was their altogether divergent political and economic interest."²³ Fortunes of Merchant class - the Khatri were well associated with the stability of imperial authority.

"The Sikh uprising began to cause considerable losses to big merchants, the *Sahukars* and certain categories of artisans such as weavers."²⁴ The gap between the Sikhs and trading community is also evident from the disturbances created by Banda Singh's on the trade-route passing through the province. A number of instances of loot and plunder were reported.²⁵ Hence the merchants, especially textile traders and weavers, extended their support to Mughals in their bid to suppress Sikh revolt.²⁶

Hence Chetan Singh finds "urban-rural dichotomy underlying these rebellions. Towns were one of prime targets of assault. The town-folk in turn seem to have been almost unanimously opposed to rebels."²⁷ "The areas which were most closely associated with Sikh rebellion were those that were also among most commercialized and therefore most easily affected by any kind of economic regression."²⁸

Moreover these Khatri also served as *Ijaradars* who would assure undisturbed realization of the revenue through their social and professional connections with the village. Hence Mughals ensured to keep the Khatri with them.

"The sack of villages around Kiratpur by Sikhs suggest that region, despite its close association with Sikh Gurus, stood opposed to the rebels."²⁹

According to Fauja Singh, "Banda Singh's struggle was in some respects a class-war. It is hardly correct to say that all the Sikhs were united under Banda Singh. The movement became almost entirely a peasant movement, because business people and even other rich people who were in the fold of Sikhism began to feel that the Sikh movement was taking a dangerous turn and left it either wholly or partially."³⁰

Now question arises who came to the rescue of Banda Singh and his Sikhs when the Imperial forces pursued them? According to Muzaffar Alam, "whenever Banda and his Sikh comrades were overpowered in the plains, they took shelter in the territories of the hillchiefs. These chiefs either openly defied Mughal authority and supported the Sikhs or turned an indifferent ear to the imperial farmans urging them to capture the Sikh leaders or drive him out of their domains."³¹

But Muzaffar Alam is also very clear about the dual role played by some of these hill chiefs. According to him, "since the Sikhs had not yet emerged as the destroyers of Mughal power, hence some of the hill chiefs always tried to keep a door open to the Mughals. Some of them sent several heads of dead Sikhs apparently collected from battle fields where Mughals had fought against the Sikhs. Not a single living Sikh is reported to have ever been captured and sent to the court by any one of these chiefs despite repeated imperial farmans to this effect".³² Some of these Chiefs seem to have acted in unison with roving grain travellers (Banjaras) who provided weapons alongwith grains to the Sikh hideouts in the hills.³³

A change in the general tenor of the imperial policy is discernible immediately after the death of Bahadur Shah. Under Jahandar Shah, "a kinder and more benign policy began to be pursued towards hill chiefs. The policy had a perceptible bearing on relations between the chiefs and the Sikhs. With Sirmour chief won over by the Mughals, Banda began to lose his base in the Sirhind region from where the Sikhs could threaten in roads even into the Mughal capital."³⁴ By the end of 1714, the Sikhs seem to have been almost totally isolated from the hill chiefs. According to Muzaffer Alam, "During the last phase of his struggle, Banda Bahadur was cornered, his resistance of the Mughals was confined to Gurdaspur and its neighbourhood in Bari Doab. Even in this area, the Chiefs of Kangra and Nurpur and some others had turned their back against the Sikhs."³¹

Conscious attempts were made by Mughals now to see gradual alienation of the Khatri from Banda Singh's movement. They obtained high positions under Jahandar Shah and Farrukhsiyar. "Discriminating measures such as shaving of beards by the Hindus alone were not repeated."³⁶

According to Muzaffar Alam "the changes in the Mughal Policy coupled with some weaknesses in the Sikh movement itself gave it a serious jolt. Banda alongwith 700 followers was captured and put to death in Delhi giving way to the start of the most confused chapter in the history of the Sikhs."³⁷

After carefully analysing the life and activities of Banda Singh Bahadur, Fauja Singh concludes that "Banda Singh Bahadur's bid to carving out an independent state, not far away from the capital of imperial authorities, was rather pre-mature and bound to fail as it did."³⁸

But Banda Singh did not die in vain. The tragic event changed the course of not only of Sikh history but also of the history of Punjab. Banda Singh had shown to the Sikhs the difference between those in power and those who were out of it. They continuously worked to regain what they had lost and in half a century became independent masters of the land of five rivers.³⁹

According to Ganda Singh, "History is an objective narrative written in a plain unembellished forthright style aiming at truthful presentation of the past, uninfluenced by the writer's emotions and prejudices. History is not history unless it is truth."⁴⁰

In his analysis about the "Sikh Uprising under Banda Bahadur" Muzaffar Alam seems to have truthfully followed the above dictum in reaching some firm conclusions.

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G. C. Narang on Banda Singh Bahadur

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History is a perspectival branch of knowledge. Different historians view the past from different perspectives and these may be similar to one another or in total contradiction of each others. Banda Singh Bahadur is one such controversial historical figure whose achievements have been analysed differently (i.e. as success or failure) by different historians. In this paper an attempt is made to critically analyse the account on Banda Singh Bahadur as discussed in G.C. Narang's *The Transformation of Sikhism*.

It is rightly stated that one cannot fully understand or appreciate the work of the historian unless one has first grasped the standpoint from which he himself approached it, secondly it is important to remember that the standpoint is itself rooted in a social and historical background.¹ The thought of the historian, as of other human beings is moulded by the environment of the time and place. Thus, before you study the historian, study his historical and social environment.² Only then can we understand in the right perspective how he came to write, what he has written. Therefore it becomes pertinent to understand the

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life background and environment in which G.C. Narang wrote *The Transformation of Sikhism*. This book which was first published in 1912 later went into as many as the editions, the latest being dated in 1972.

G. C. Narang was born in 1878 at village Buddoke Gossain in district Gujranwala. He belonged to a Sikh Sehajdhari family of Narang Arora sub-caste. He got his first lesson in Sikhism from his father Lala Mool Raj Narang in whose memory he dedicated his book with the deepest reverence stating that it was he who was the first to have inspired him with an interest in Sikh scripture and Sikh history. He took his early education in the local gurudwara where he learnt to read and understand the *Guru Granth Sahib* thereby thus increasing his interest in Sikh history. He completed his higher education in the Panjab and Calcutta universities. While serving as lecturer in the D.A.V. College, Lahore, he came into close contact with some of the best Arya Samajist minds such as Mahatma Hans Raj which had a tremendous influence on his ideology in the days to come.

From the above it is clear that there was a combination of both Sikh and Arya Samaj influences on his psyche. He was not all in all an Arya Samajist or Singh Sabhaite. The standpoint and outlook which he came to acquire represented the golden mean between the two extreme points of view. The writing of the book also has to be seen in the context of the Hindu-Muslim divide in the early decades of the twentieth century. The relations between the Hindus and Muslims during this period were anything but cordial. The All-India Muslim League has been formed in 1906 and this further increased the differences between the two communities. The Congress too was quite sectarian at this time with a strong pro-Hindu bias and conceived of Indian nationalism in terms of Hindu culture and civilisation. So as was the case of most of the Hindus at this time, this anti-Muslim bias of G.C. Narang had a powerful impact on his mind. Later in 1926, when he became the member of the Hindu Mahasabha, Narang's anti-Muslim bias increased further.

Thus the influences and factors which moulded the thought pattern of G.C. Narang were diverse and varied. He made Sikhism his life-long

study and to him Sikhism was a movement in Punjab having as its chief aim, the raising of Hindus as a nation. The problem before him was how Sikh history could be discussed within the context of the Hindu-Muslim divide. In the preface to the first edition, he writes that his aim is to "present to the general reader a concise but complete view of the various processes which led to the transformation of Sikhism from a religious sect into a political organisation. The book neither pretends to be a chronicle of the Sikhs nor a dissertation on Sikhism itself. It is simply a brief narrative of the various stages through which the Sikhs passed and the vicissitudes which they underwent before they became the sovereign power in the Punjab.³ A reading of the book shows that it is not a detailed narration and analysis of events but more of an interpretation or explanation of events as understood by the author.

G.C. Narang's interpretation of the process of transformation seems to have been made in terms of certain pre-conceived ideas and tendencies. He has studied the Sikh movement as a process of continuous development on the foundations laid down by the founder - Guru Nanak. The transformation that was brought about during the times of his successors and later on was a natural process of evolution and there was no disruption in the basic character of the movement. "The seed which blossomed in the time of Guru Govind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. This sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was undoubtedly forged by Govind but the steel had been provided by Nanak."⁴

G. C. Narang has this preconceived notion that the inspiration for all great political movements came from religion. 'All political progress requires high aspirations, an enterprising spirit, the will to do, the soul to dare and the purity and integrity of private and public life and any movement which contributes to the growth of these virtues in a people qualifies them for making political effort and advancing on the parts of political glory. And the more common sources from which these virtues have flourished has been religion.⁵ It is aptly remarked by Jogendra Singh in the foreword to this book that, "Narang has portrayed how spiritual emancipation and right lead raised the Khalsa into a nation."⁶

While giving an account on the conquest and achievements of Banda Singh Bahadur, G.C. Narang states that the accounts regarding these as given by the English historians are meagre and so he has dwelt upon these at greater length.⁷ While discussing the early life of Banda Singh Bahadur, he makes no mention of the sources he has consulted. He speaks about the meeting between the Guru and Banda Singh in 1708 at Nanded and also says that the Guru decided to make him the future leader of the Khalsa who would carry out his mission. Narang says that Govind Singh appealed to Banda Singh to take up his work, avenge the blood of his father and his innocent children and strike a blow at the Mughal despotism. Thus the mission of Banda Singh, as interpreted by G.C. Narang was to carry on the work of Guru Gobind Singh and establish the sovereignty of the Khalsa in Punjab.

The Guru gave Banda Singh a sword and five arrows and also asked him to obey five commandments (i) to lead a life of celibacy.⁸ (ii) to speak the truth (iii) to act in accordance with the wishes of the Khalsa (iv) not to found any new sect (v) do not be proud of victories. When Banda Singh reached the Punjab, thousands of Sikhs flocked to him and soon he could assemble quite a sizeable army, which G.C. Narang divides into three classes.⁹ He quotes Khafi Khan to state that the army of Banda Singh had risen to 40,000.¹⁰

For information on plunder of Sirhind, Narang has taken the help from Syed Mohammed Latif and Khafi Khan and to him the atrocities attributed to Banda Singh by these writers appear as highly exaggerated.¹¹ Though Narang writes about the plunder of Kaithal, Samana, Ambala, Mustafabad and Sadhowra by Banda Singh, he does not mention the sources.

Following the basic thesis of his work, viz. the stages of transformation of Sikhism, Narang while summing up the achievements of Banda Singh Bahadur states, "Guru Govind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed, if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. He had sown the seed, Banda Singh reaped the harvest. The Guru had enunciated principles, Banda Singh carried them into practise. Govind had destroyed the awe

inspired by Mughal depotism. Banda Singh completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus after centuries of subjection realised under Banda Singh that they could still fight and conquer, and when he fell, the dreams of the Khalsa supremacy were considerably nearer the point of realisation.¹²

Narang portrays 'Banda Singh as the champion of Hinduism'¹³ who was regarded by the Hindus as the scourge of Mohammedans sent by God to punish them for their crimes. Oppressed Hindus resorted to him for help which was willingly and efficiently given, a fact which had a great influence in promoting the growth of Sikh power.

Narang is of the opinion that Banda Singh was not a baptised Sikh. "He was after all not a regular convert to Sikhism and had enjoyed spiritual leadership in his own limited sphere. He did not enter into the spirit of Sikhism as it had been modified by Guru Govind Singh."¹⁴ Narang refers to him as only Banda, not even Banda Singh Bahadur or Banda Singh Singh Bahadur. The chapter on Banda Singh is entitled, 'Sikh conquests under Banda Singh' only.¹⁵

To further project Banda Singh as a leader of the Hindus, Narang states that, "Banda Singh tried to give Sikhism a more decidedly Hinduistic tone by altering some of its distinctive institutions (1) the long hair, the most prominent badge of Sikhism and most important under Govind ceased to remain an essential feature of Sikhism under Banda Singh (2) The eating of animal diet had been encouraged by Govind but Banda Singh being a Vaishnava, discountenanced it and exhorted the Sikhs to refrain from it. (3) He substituted Fateh Dharma, Fateh Darshan instead of Wah Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh. (4) Guru Govind Singh had instructed Banda Singh never to do anything without consulting the sense of the Khalsa. Banda Singh acted upon this advice in the beginning but his successes made him indifferent to the opinion of the Khalsa."¹⁶ Thus as concluded by Narang, Banda Singh tried to tamper with Sikhism and modify it in such a way as to make it appear less sectarian and more nationalistic in its character. Thus Narang interprets the struggle of Banda Singh against the Mughals in terms of a national struggle and not sectarian.

It may also be mentioned here that some of the points raised above regarding long hair and animal diet are incorrect. That *Bandai* Sikhs upto this time kept long hair is the strongest proof of Banda Singh having never failed to maintain the most essential requisite of Sikhism.

Narang's method of documentation is quite scanty and inadequate as for a large part of his account on Banda Singh he has not cited the sources he has consulted, in a detailed and proper manner. For instance while stating about the fact that Govind's widow (Mata Sundari) had been won over by the government and then she issued a letter to all Sikhs not to have anything to do with Banda, Narang mentions his source only as *Panth Prakash* without giving any details about the author and which *Panth Prakash* is he referring to.¹⁷

For Narang, Banda Singh failed in his mission, "as his glorious career was cut short by his sacerdotal ambition, incomprehension of the true nature of Sikhism, the machinations of the Mughal government and the demoralisation which for a time Farukh Siyar's persecuting hand spread into the ranks of the Khalsa."¹⁸

Though Banda Singh could not fulfil his mission completely, his contribution in the process of transformation of Sikhism is emphatically recognised by Narang when he states that in 1768, "the seed sown by Nanak had now thanks, to the talent of his successors, the great military genius of Govind and the unconquerable spirit of Banda, blossomed into a rich crop."¹⁹ Also Banda's great successes gave Sikhism a prestige and a power which had never yet been associated with it, not even during the time of Guru Govind Singh.

Conclusively speaking we may say that though G.C. Narang presents Banda Singh as a champion of Hinduism he does not fail to recognise his contribution, in raising the prestige and power of Sikhism as well. Such a conclusion perhaps emerges due to the combined influences of Sikhism and Arya Samaj on his mental psyche.

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
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Banda Singh Bahadur : His Achievements

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Rise of Banda Singh Bahadur is a landmark in the history of the Punjab. Guru Gobind Singh made him a valliant soldier from a mere ascetic as is clear from his early career.

Accoding to Khafi Khan in two or three months 4,000 horsemen and seven or eight thousands foot soldiers joined Banda Singh Bahadur and their number soon reached eight or nine thousand and rose at last to 40,000.¹ Banda Singh Bahadur marched towards Sirhind and destroyed and plundered some important Muslim places on his way; Kaithal was the first town which was attacked by Banda. There he received the news that a large amount of treasure was being taken to Delhi. He fell upon it and took away the entire treasure which was distributed among his soldiers.²

On November 26.1709 A.D Banda Singh attacked Samana, the native place of Jalal-ud-Din who had been employed in the execution of Guru Teg Bahadur. About 10,000 Muslims lost their lives and the palatial buildings of the city were razed to the ground. The town was looted and a huge amount fell into the hands of the Sikhs. The Banda Singh Bahadur took eastern route near the foot hills. His purpose was to wait for the arrival of Sikhs before he

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launched an attack on Sirhind. On the way to Sadhaura, Banda Singh overran all important towns namely Ghuram, Thaska, Shahbad and Mustafabad, Qadam-ud-Din, the commander of Kapuri was notorious for his lustful campaigns. He was a tyrant and libertine of the worst type. Banda Singh was determined to chastise the defamed chief. He attacked Kapuri and setting fire to the strongholds of Qadam-ud-Din's debaucheries, scattered his wealth to the four winds.³

The next target of Banda Singh Bahadur was Sadhaura. Usman Khan, the ruler of the place was following the anti-Hindu policy. Banda Singh had received the complaints that the Hindus were not allowed to cremate their dead and to perform any other religious ceremony. Cows were slaughtered before their houses and their blood and entrails were left in the streets. It was also learnt that the *faujdar* had tortured the great Muslim saint, Sayed Badruddin Shah, popularly known as Budhu Shah for his help to the tenth Guru in the battle of Bhangani. Finally Banda Singh attacked Sadhuara which was destroyed and plundered. The mausoleum of Qutbul Aqtab was set on fire and all the Muslims who had taken shelter in the mansion of Sayed Budhu Shah, to save their lives, were put to sword. The place then came to be known as '*Qutal Garhi*' or slaughter house. Then the Sikhs proceeded to Mukhilspur and captured the fort of this place, which was named as Lohgarh after its repair. The fanatic Muslims of Chhat and Banur were the next victims of Banda Singh Bahadur.⁴

Sirhind was notorious particularly on account of the brutal death of the two infant sons of Guru Gobind Singh by the orders of the Nawab Wazir Khan. The Sikhs were burning with rage to wreck their vengeance on the hateful ruler of this wretched city, which was then called *Guru-ki-Mari* or the accursed one. It was looked upon as a sacred duty to take part in the coming battle of Sirhind and the desire for martyrdom had brought thousands from *Majha* and *Malwa* to join in the attack.⁵ Khafi Khan asserts that Banda Singh had forty thousand men at this time with him which seems to be mere exaggeration. Banda Singh had no artillery, no elephants and not even sufficient number of horses for all his men.⁶ This was

however, compensated by religious zeal with which Banda Singh and his followers were fighting. On the other hand Wazir Khan collected a huge army of about 20,000. He had a number of field guns known as *Zamburaks* and a good number of elephants with him. On May 12, 1710 A.D. the famous battle at Chapper Chiri began. The Sikhs were left to be commanded by Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharm Singh, Ali Singh, Baj Singh and Binod Singh. Then Banda Singh came to the forefront and led the Sikhs in the battle-field. A fierce encounter ensued, in which the Sikhs were victorious.⁷ Wazir Khan then came facing with Baj Singh and attacked him with a lance which was snatched by Baj Singh and wounded his horse with it. Soon Wazir Khan was killed. The death of Wazir Khan was a signal for the spread of confusion among the ranks of the Mughal army and the Sikhs fell upon them fiercely. Khafi Khan writes : "Not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in. Horse-men and foot-men fell under the swords of the infidels (Sikhs), who pursued them as far as Sirhind."

After two days of resistance the city of Sirhind was captured. For three days the plunder of Sirhind continued. Some Muslims⁸ European writers⁹ exaggerated the destruction of Sirhind by Banda Singh. Khafi Khan has gone to the extent of saying that even wombs of pregnant women were ripped open and babies cut to pieces. These Mohammedan writers, however, writes Thornton, are not to be relied upon. After reviewing critically Latif's statement, Dr. G. C. Narang writes, "This seems to be much exaggerated. The mosque of Ahmed Shah, the most magnificent of all such buildings still stands as it did before the battle and as I think sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement"¹⁰ Banda Singh collected a booty of 2 crores from here. Nevertheless, the grave of one Sikh lady Anup Kaur who had committed suicide to save her honour from the hands of Sher Mohammed Khan; was dug out to perform the last rites. The city was spared of complete destruction at the intervention of local Hindus who appealed to Banda Singh for mercy and amnesty was granted to the inhabitants on their paying a large ransom.¹¹

The entire province from Ludhiana to Jamuna with an annual revenue of 36 lakhs fell into the hands of the Sikhs. Banda Singh organised his administrative machinery. Baj Singh a commander of the Sikhs was appointed Governor of Sirhind and Ali Singh, the leader of the Malwa Sikhs as his deputy. Fateh Singh was given the charge of Samana and Ram Singh a brother of Baj Singh, that of Thanesar jointly with Baba Binod Singh. The Muslim *Hakims* of all the 28 *paraganas* of Sirhind were replaced by Hindus and most of the country between Sutlej and the Jamuna passed into the hands of the Sikhs.¹² Mohammedans like Didar Khan and Nasiruddin became Didar Singh and Nasir Singh respectively. Then Banda Singh went to Mukhalisipur, near Sadhaura, a pleasant hill resort and made it his headquarter. The place was given the new name as Lohgarh or iron castle. He adopted royal title and struck coins in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. This inscription on both sides of the coins read as : "By the Grace of True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds. The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons and the victory is of Guru Gobind Singh, the King of Kings." The new royal seal was also introduced for his official documents and letter patent. The inscription on the seal was the kettle and the sword (symbols of charity and power). Victory and ready patronage were ordained to have been obtained from Guru Nanak-Gobind Singh.

The next great work of Banda Singh was the abolition of *zamindari* system. The *zamindars* or landlords used to pay fixed amount to the government and were almost independent in their internal affairs. They were addicted to extortion and corruption. They used to fleece the tenants. Once some peasants from the villages near Sadhaura came to Banda Singh and complained of the tyranny of the *Zamindars*. Banda Singh asked them to stand in a line and ordered Baj Singh to open the fire. They were taken aback and asked the reason for that strange treatment, they were told that they were thousands in number and could not get their grievances redressed from the hands of *zamindars* who were small in number. They understood the point of Banda Singh and *zamindars* were no where seen after that. They became the peasant proprietors of lands they

have been cultivating. That example was followed at many other places and even complaints from the oppressed people excited them against the government officials. Irvine writes, "In all the *parganas* occupied by the Sikhs the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete."¹³ Out of the Sikhs under Banda Singh, he forged an instrument of justice for the poor and the down-trodden and of severe chastisement for those who had been following trade of oppression with impunity. Banda Singh executed justice and taught the people of Punjab to fight against oppression and tyranny.

At that time, Banda Singh received a complaint that Jalal-ud-Din, the *Hakim* of Jalalabad was ill-treating the Hindus and was imprisoning the new converts to Sikhism. Banda Singh attacked Saharanpur on his way to Jalalabad and its *Hakim*. Ali Mohammad fled to Delhi but the officers and the people, submitted after some defence. The *Peerzadas* of *Behat* were notorious for their anti-Hindu policy. They were slaughtering cows in the public. The town was attacked and *Peerzadas* were killed in large number. On the way Ambeta and Nanauta were captured. Then Banda Singh proceeded to Jalalabad and ordered its siege but the heavy rains, inundation of Krishna river and the urgent calls of the Sikhs of Doab obliged him to abandon the siege. He next took Karnal and reduced the country upto Panipat. The Sikhs then reached Delhi and everyone was struck with terror. Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asad Khan, the governor of capital was greatly alarmed and behaved in a most pusillanimous manner and the inhabitants were seized with terror and ran for shelter with their families to the eastern provinces.

In Jalandhar Doab many Muslim officials had been replaced by the Sikhs. The Sikhs sent a *parwana* to Shamas Khan, the *Faujdar* of Jalandhar Doab to effect certain reforms and to hand over the treasures to the Sikhs personally. On the initial success of the imperial army, the demoralized *faujdar* got courage. He raised the slogan of *Jehad* and collected an army of more than hundred thousands Mohammedans and marched from Sultanpur. He had more than 50,000 horses and 30 thousands foot with him. According to Khafi Khan. Banda Singh had seventy to eighty thousand foot and

horses with him. Banda Singh hurried back to Jalandhar Doab and joined the Sikhs who had retired to Rahon, on seeing the huge force of Mohammedans. The fort of Rahon was besieged but on dark night the Sikhs slipped away from their entrenchments, but soon afterwards when the Sikhs came to know that only a small force was left in the fort they occupied it again. Hoshiarpur and other important places of Doab were also captured by the Sikhs soon after.

Inspired with these victories, the Sikhs decided to occupy the whole of Punjab. Eight thousand Sikhs came to Amritsar and marched towards Kalanaur and Batala. Pathankot was also occupied. Sayyed Islam Khan, the *faujdar* of Lahore was so much overawed that he dared not to come out and face the Sikhs. Having seen their *Faujdar* failing against the Sikhs, the *Mullas* raised a green banner, called *Haidri* Flag, and proclaimed a *Jehad* against the Sikhs. The rich Muslims contributed liberally to the religious cause. The Sikhs were besieged in the fort of Bhagwant Rai in the village Bharat Nagar Lahore. At night the Sikhs fled away in cover of darkness but the Sikhs were again defeated at Kotla Begum. Finally the Sikhs attacked *Ghazis* at Bhilowal suddenly and inflicted a crushing defeat on them and brought about a general destruction and devastation in their ranks. The Sikhs became the masters of the whole of the area between the rivers Ravi and Beas.

The Mughal Emperor who had come to Rajputana from Deccan was much alarmed at the success of the Sikhs in the Punjab. He called upon the *Subedars* of Delhi and Oudh, *faujders* and *Nazims* of Muradabad and Allahabad, the *Sayyeds* of Barha also. He ordered all the government servants to clear of their beards. He hastened towards Sirhind. The vanguards of imperial army under Mahabat Khan and Feroze Khan attacked Ram Singh and Binod Singh at Thanesar and Trawari. The Sikh armies retreated to the fort of Lohgarh.

Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor was already much terrified and upset to know the incessant victories of Banda Singh Bahadur. He also heard a number of rumours about Banda Singh Bahadur and

his army. It was circulated that no weapons were of any effect on Banda. Flames were rushing out of his mouth. But still the royal forces were continuing their march. On 4th December the imperial forces were encamped at Sadhaura when the Sikhs attacked them and it appeared as if the royal army would lose the field. In the evening, when the Sikhs saw reinforcement of the royal troops they retired in the fort of Lohgarh. The emperor besieged the fort and the Sikhs inside were in shortage of provision. Banda Singh fled away by leaving Gulab Singh in his disguise inside the fort. Next morning when Munim Khan entered the fort, he found that the hawk had flown away. Hamid Khan was ordered to follow Banda Singh in the hills and also the Raja of Nahan who had helped Banda Singh was to be punished. Raja Bhup Prakash was also arrested and taken to Delhi.

After his escape, Banda Singh reached the hills and issued *Hukamnamas* to the Sikhs calling them to reach Kiratpur. The Sikhs flocked from all directions and Banda Singh asked Bhim Chand of Kahlur to submit. After receiving refusal, his state was attacked and his army decimated. Seeing this, other hill chiefs, Raja Sidh Sain of Mandi, Raja of Kulu and Raja of Chamba accepted the supremacy of Banda. Raja Udey Singh of Chamba gave his daughter to Banda Singh in marriage and later on a son, with the name Ajay Singh was born. Banda Singh attacked *Faujdar* of Jammu on 4th June 1711 A.D. and defeated him near Behrampur.

Mohammad Amin Khan and Rustamdil Khan hotly pursued Banda Singh with a large imperial army. Banda Singh was pushed towards Jammu. Bahadur Shah issued the orders that wherever the Sikhs were to be found, they should be killed. Consequently, indiscriminate persecution and slaughter of Sikhs and their sympathisers followed. The Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah died on 18th February. His death was followed by war of succession in which Jahandar Shah came to power only to be ousted by Farrukhsiyar in 1713 A.D. During these commotions, descending on the plains the Sikhs again flocked around Banda Singh and occupied Sadhaura and Lohgarh.

Farrukhsiyar appointed Abdus Samad Khan, as governor of Lahore and his son Zakaria Khan as *Faujdar* of Multan. He issued orders to extirpate the Sikhs. The new governor of Lahore was joined by Mohammad Amin Khan, the Mughal commander, sent by the emperor for the purpose. Mohammad Amin Khan was called back to Delhi and Abdus Samad Khan continued his efforts to arrest Banda Singh. After about a year, Banda Singh suddenly fell upon Batala and Kalanaur. Farrukhsiyar was exasperated to hear it and sent orders to the governor of Lahore to march against Banda Singh with the help of the Raja of Kangra and Jasrota. The first clash was so severe that Banda Singh was about to get victory over the imperial army but in the absence of strong position he was obliged to retreat to the fort known as Gurdas Nangal. Finding his position difficult, Banda Singh occupied in the *Haveli* of Bhai Duni Chand, dug a moat round it, filled it with water and determined to give fight the enemy. He was closely besieged. In December 1715 Banda Singh and his followers were taken as prisoners. Between two to three hundred Sikhs were captured here, bound hand and foot, were made over to the imperial troops, who under the order of the *nawab* carried them to the banks of river Ravi.¹⁴ Having beheaded them, their bodies were thrown into the river.¹⁵

From Gurdas Nangal, Banda Singh was taken to Lahore and paraded there in an iron cage. On the following day, Zakaria Khan as incharge of the prisoners marched towards Delhi. Some of the Sikhs were put to death and their heads borne on pikes before Banda Singh and others as they marched to Delhi with all the signs of ignominy usual with the bigots and current among barbarous or half civilized conquerors.¹⁶ On February 29, 1716 the procession reached Delhi. The iron cage of Banda Singh was placed on the back of an elephant, After him came the other Sikhs prisoners tied two and two on camels. The Sikhs were taken in procession. Mirza Mohammad Harisi writer of *Ibratanama* calls it a '*tamasha*'. The leader of the Sikhs and his associates were handed over to Ibrahim-ud-Din Khan, *Mir Atish* to be imprisoned at the Tripolia. Banda's

wife and son were sent to *harem*. On 5th March, 1716 A.D., the execution of the Sikhs began just opposite *Chabutra Kotwali*. The Sikhs were so staunch that none of them wavered. Rather they quarreled with one another for precedence to death. Irvine has remarked. "All observers, unite in remarking on the wonderful patience and resolution with which these men underwent their fate. Their attachment and devotion to their leader was wonderful to be held. They had no fear of death, they called the executioner '*mukti*' or deliverer, they cried out joyfully, "O *Mukti*, kill me first."

Banda Singh's execution was delayed. It was probably due to the reason that Mughal officers wanted to obtain information from him about the treasure he had collected during the last five years. Despite the best possible efforts they failed to collect any clue from him. At last, on 19th June 1716 A.D., he was taken in a procession with its twenty six companions to the shrine of Khawaja Qutabud Din Bakhtiyar Kaki near Kutab Minar. He was offered the usual choice between Islam and death. Banda Singh of course, selected the latter Banda Singh's four years old son, Ajay Singh was placed in his lap and he was asked to kill him which according to Cunningham, he instantaneously did.¹⁷ But Elphinston and Harisi are of the opinion that Banda Singh refused to do so. The baby was cut to pieces and his quivering heart was flung into Banda Singh's mouth. After that Banda Singh's right and then left hand and feet, his right and left eye were cut, and removed respectively, his flesh was torn with red hot pincers and finally his head was chopped off. Banda Singh remained calm upto the last.

Banda Singh was a symbol of unity among the Sikhs after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. He combined the scattered elements which had gone to the different sides after the departure of Guru Gobind Singh from the Punjab. His able and enterprising leadership kept them united even during the most difficult and unfavourable circumstances. Banda, after receiving baptism from the hands of Guru Gobind Singh remained a staunch believer in Guru's mission' and carried out his mission to the last breath of his life.¹⁸

His coins and seals were issued in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. He strictly followed the rules of Sikh conduct, called *Rahit*. His pure and high conduct in the principles of Sikhism showed the path to his followers even during the most critical times. At Kalanaur in April, 1711 A.D., he assured the Mohammedans of the place that their religion, would not be interfered in any way rather they were allowed to say *Namaz* and *Azan*. About 5,000 Muslims got themselves recruited in Banda's army on due payment and fought against their own breathrens. He propagated Sikhism but gave full religious liberty to the people of other religions.

Banda Singh was not only an unparalleled warrior but a good administrator too. Though, he had short time to introduce any new machinery of the administration yet he established set of rules for his administration at Mukhlispur. The conquered area was divided among his companions. The abolition of *Zamindari* was a unique measure of his administration. He was a reformer too. Dr. Ganda Singh writes, "He abolished the *Zamindari* System and introduced peasant proprietorship which upto this day is recognised as one of the best fiscal reforms."

Banda Singh raised huge army with his limited resources. The organisation of his soldeirs "led to victories in the battle-fields". He himself fought at the front and taught his followers to fight and died for the righteous cause. His coolness of courage and dauntless bravery was unparalleled in the history of that very period. Dr. Ganda Singh states, "He (Banda) won thundering victories and made the people feel for the time being a great genius had risen in the land to revenge the wrongs of centuries and to set up a new order of things." Out of the united Sikhs, he forged an instrument of justice for poor, sufferers and down trodden. He was a determined enemy of sinful, irreligious and unjust rulers and officers.

Banda Singh was one of the champions who showed the path that the Sikh *Raj* could be established. Banda Singh was the just man among the Sikhs to think of founding a political *Raj*. He fought battles not to cripple the Mughal power, but to destroy it root and branch. He therefore, ousted the government official and supplanted

them with his own. One of the main aims of Banda Singh's life was to take revenge of the violent death of the innocent children of Guru Gobind Singh. He infused such spirit into the hearts of his followers that even the most powerful and organized soldiers of the Mughal army could not stand against them. After the initial victories, he assumed even royal authority. The evil doers and brutes were duly punished and destroyed.

The non-Muslims, under the inspiring leadership of Banda, learnt to fight the oppression and tyranny. He brought political consciousness among the people. His aim was nothing short of liberation of the country from the Mughal rule. He taught to destroy the terror of the Mughal Empire by fighting against the high handedness, atrocities and religious persecution of the Mughals. Banda Singh was most daring and the bravest in the battlefield, even to the extent of recklessness for the fulfilment of his aim. He recreated a will for emancipation among the people of Punjab. He suffered the inhuman punishment of getting his body being cut into pieces and set an example for the generation to come to make sacrifice for the cause of the people. He rejected all temptations of a princely life by accepting Islam. Dr. Ganda Singh remarks : "But all the successes gained by him were not only on the battlefield. There was a revolution effected in the minds of people, of which history often fails to take note. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for a national cause. The example set by Banda Singh and his companions in this respect was to serve them as a beacon light in the darker days to come. The idea of national state, long dead once again became a living aspiration and although suppressed for the time being by relentless persecutions. It went on working underground like a smouldering fire and came out forty years later with a fuller influence, never to be suppressed again.

Banda Singh Bahadur, a devoted Sikh, completed the work begun by Guru Gobind Singh. He followed the footprints of Guru Gobind Singh in facing the difficulties by not yielding to the tortures and tyranny. As Dr. G.C. Narang emphasises, "Guru Gobind Singh had diverted the attention of his followers from the plough to the

sword and had set the seal of his sanction on war and bloodshed, if the cause of justice and righteousness could not be otherwise vindicated. He had sown the seeds. Banda Singh reaped the harvest. The Guru enunciated principles. Banda Singh carried them into practice. Gobind Singh had destroyed the awe inspired by the Mughal despotism. Banda Singh completely broke the charm of its invincibility. The Hindus after centuries of subjection realised under Banda Singh that they could still fight and conquer and when he fell, the dreams of *Khalsa* supremacy inspired by Gobind Singh were considerably nearer the point of realisation."

Banda Singh Bahadur resembled his master Guru Gobind Singh in his looks.¹⁹ He had the same thin wiry physique, the same medium stature and the same light brown complexion which later on under the influence of more bracing climate of the hilly north took on a pink hue.²⁰

In the opinion of Thornton, "The contemporary writers too could not be free from bias as they were either official reporters or proteges of the Mughal ruler and therefore their accounts may not be implicitly trusted."

Studying purely from historical point of view, it can be safely concluded that Banda Singh was neither a monster nor a blood thirsty tyrant. It is not proper to say that Banda Singh had massacred the Mohammedans indiscriminately. An official newswriter in April 1711 wrote to Bahadur Shah that Banda Singh gave an assurance to the Mohammedans of Kalanaur that their religion would not be interfered and got 5000 Muslims recruited in his army on due payments who later fought on the side of Banda Singh against their breathern. Had Banda Singh been a determined enemy of the Muslims, none of them would have joined his army. It is also baseless to say that he followed ruthless destruction at Sirhind. As Dr. G.C. Narang remarks, "The Mausoleum of Ahmed Shah (Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi) still stands as it did before the battle and I think sufficient evidence of the exaggeration in Latif's statement." At the same time, it is not certain to say that Guru Gobind Singh should have been less retributive where Banda Singh was more. Needless to say

that the tyranny and barbarism of the Mughal officials had crossed all limits of Guru's toleration. The bricking alive of two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh was the height of cruelty and barbarism on the part of Mughal government. Banda Singh's activities of the destruction of Sirhind were less tyrannical than those of the Mughal *faujdar*s. McGregor wrote, "Had the Guru himself not been weighed down by years and affection or oppressed with incident to his position, in short, had he been a younger man; there is little doubt that the punishment he would have inflicted on the Mussalmans, though differing in kind would have been equally ample with that bestowed by Banda?"²³

Banda Singh was an able and inspiring leader. He united the Sikhs who had been left unguided after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. After his departure from the south he moved towards the north. He issued *Hukamnamas* to the wandering Sikhs and collected them under his banner. Sikhs under his leadership showed miracles and the mighty arm of the Mughals had to retreat many times. With limited resources he collected and prepared a huge army. He created a will among the *Panjabees* to resist tyranny or live and die for a national cause. He commanded unflinching loyalty from his followers who were ready to sacrifice every thing at the bidding of their leader. When being pursued by the royal forces Banda Singh was besieged at Lohgarh, then, one of the followers named Gulab Singh, sacrificed himself for his leader who escaped in disguise. To quote Dr. G.C. Narang, "To preclude the possibility of a pursuit, Banda Singh had accepted the loyal offer of a devoted servant, namd Gulaboo who bore an exact likeness to him in features and had left him behind to personate him. Khan-i-Khana entered the fort in triumph and transported with joy to find Banda Singh among the prisoners of war. He was, however, soon disappointment to the Emperor's great disappointment and indignation which led to the disgrace of the aged minister."

Banda Singh was an unparalleled general. With limited resources he collected a grand army and led it to victory. Banda Singh was a fine archman as well. The Sikhs, under Banda Singh conquered

Samana, Kapuri and Sadhaura. The tyranny of Wazir Khan of Sirhind was brought to an end at Chappar Chari on May 12, 1710. Sirhind, the symbol of the Sikh hatred was destroyed and devastated.

Banda Singh was an efficient organiser who united the Sikhs under him after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. He was self reliant and self dependent man, who never lost courage even at the most critical time. He understood well the might of the Mughal Empire but still raised the standard of war of liberation in the country. His companions did not hesitate sacrificing their lives at his command. Though the Sikhs were well aware of the fact that they were to meet with cruel death yet they never complained to Banda Singh that he was responsible for their miseries. The patience with the Sikhs showed at Delhi was remarkable. In the opinion of Khushwant Singh. "He renounced both pacificism and the life of solitude to rouse a down-rodde peasantry to take up arms, a man who shook one of the most powerful empires in the world to its very foundations with such violence that it was never able to reestablish its authority." The Sikhs under Banda Singh had no fear of death. The aim of Banda Singh was nothing short of liberation of the contry from Mughal rule, which was still foreign in most of its essentials."³⁷ Banda Singh brought national awakening among the people and prepared them for the fight against barbarism and oppression. According to Malcolm, "If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Deccan which he did in 1710, there is every reason to think that the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by foreign invaders." His great successes gave Sikhism a prestige and a power which had never, yet been associated with it. Those who had never heard the names of the Guru were impressed with its (Sikhism's) grandeur by the victories of Banda Singh and joined his ranks in thousand. His personal magnetism too was great and his undaunted courage and extraordinarily valour, knit his folowers closely to him.³⁸ None of the Sikhs captured renounced his faith for the safety of his life due to the exemplary piety and lofty character of his leader. As Irvine says, "All observers, Indian and European unite remarking on the wonderful patience and resolution with which these men underwent their fate. Their attachment and

devotion to their leader were wonderful to behold. They had no fear of death.” He was the first man to think of founding the Political kingdom by destroying the Mughal power.

It can never be denied that Banda Singh had the power of self-sacrifice when Guru Gobind Singh asked him to go to the Punjab to remove the wrongs of the Government officials and help the poor and downtrodden. Here he was completely in fighting against the Mughal power. Though, many times, he had to face difficulties, hardships and even starvation, yet he remained unaltered from the path shown by Guru Gobind Singh. If he wanted he could enjoy the comforts and pleasures of life offered to him by the government. He was always happy and cheerful. He never set aside the fulfilment of the aim for which he had been sent to the Punjab. Even at the time of his execution at Delhi he remained cool, calm and cheerful. His son was butchered before his eyes but he was silent and unmoved. The execution of Banda Singh Bahadur has been described by Dr. G.C. Narang in these words. “On the eighth day, Banda Singh himself was arraigned before his judges. He was dragged from his cage like wild beast and then dressed in a princely robe embroidered with gold and scarlet turban. The heads of his followers, who had been previously executed were paraded on pikes all round him. The executioner with a drawn salute stood behind him in readiness to carry out the sentence of his judges. All the *Omèrahs* of the courts tauntingly asked him why he, a man of such unquestionable knowledge and ability had committed such outrageous offences. He retorted that he was a scourge in the hands of Almighty for the chastisement of evil-doers and that power was now given to others to chastise him for the transgression. His son was now placed in his lap and he was ordered to cut his throat, a knife being handed to him for that purpose. He did so, silent and unmoved, his own flesh was then torn with red hot pincers and amid these torments he expired.” He did not fight and die for selfish end but for the freedom of the country. He created spirit of nationalism among the people and taught them to resist tyranny and oppression of whatever type it may be. He destroyed the awe inspired by Mughal despotism. The

people learnt from him how to live with dignity and how to die with honour for the national cause.

Banda Singh Bahadur occupies a very high place in history. He is ranked as one of the great generals of the world. As it is alleged by some writers, he was neither a freebooter nor a monster. He was not blood thirsty and tyrant like Chingez Khan. His selflessness for the cause of the people was unbounded. Throughout his career he remained true to his aim getting the Punjab liberated from the foreign rule. He instilled in his followers a will for the emancipation and a confidence for the success. As expert marks-man, the confidence with which he wielded his sword elicited a praise even from the bitterest of his foes. He was not determined enemy of the Muslims. At Kalanaur he had granted full religious freedom to the Muslims of the area. He commanded unflinching and unquestioning obedience from his followers. They suffered with him through thick and thin. The *Khalsa* as we have seen, instead of turning their back on the national hero stood by him up to the last and sacrificed themselves with him at Delhi. He propagated his religion and won over many converts to Sikhism. Even then, he was above religious bigotry and fanaticism. He prepared the mind of the peasants to fight against corrupt *zamindars* and thus brought about a great fiscal reform. It is, of course, undeniable that the man who brought a revolution in the character of the Sikhs and breathed a new life in them was Gobind Singh. But it may be said without any fear or contradiction that it was Banda Singh who taught them first how to fight and conquer. "The plot was of the Guru's conception, some actors were prepared and trained by him, but it was Banda Singh who taught them out and made them play as it were before the full house. Banda Singh created political consciousness among the people. He was first man to think of founding the rule of the people. He wanted to destroy Mughal power completely.

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18th Century Western Writings on Banda Singh Bahadur

Dr. K. S. Bajwa*

Political ascendancy of the Sikhs in the North-Western parts of Hindustan in the middle of the eighteenth century and their incessant incursions into the Gangetic-Doab which brought them face to face with British forces stationed at Avadh, alarmed the authorities at Fort William. Activities of the Sikhs were viewed as a potent threat to the British designs in India. To frame a definite policy regarding them required information about the basic source which caused enhancement of their political power. Consequently besides commissioning civil servants, the British residents with the Nawab of Avadh, the Marathas and the Mughal Emperor at Delhi, were asked to collect as much information as could be extracted from any source. Resultantly, due to the efforts of both : the commissioned agents of the British East Indian Company and of some individuals many accounts on the Sikhs appeared in the last two decades of the 18th century in the form of letters, papers, tracts, travelogue etc.

While writing on the Sikhs, however, the Western scholars confronted with several problems like, dearth of authentic source material, absence of incessant personal contact and ignorance of Punjabi language, the language of the Sikhs and their scripture.²

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Therefore, these accounts are based on occasional observations of their authors and the information they got from the persons who pretended of possessing authentic knowledge about the Sikhs. Some of them had based their accounts on the Persian Chroniels which at times were not correct and free from prejudice. Resultantly, a number of factual error have krep't into their accounts which have been repeated by the later historians of the Sikhs both, Indians and non-Indians. Also, some of them presents incoherent accounts, besides reflecting strong bias towards the Sikhs.³ However, inspite of all these shortcomings these accounts are very important as these shed much light on Banda Singh Bahadur and the nature of Sikh Movement under him.

An earliest information about Banda Singh Bahadur and his associates has come to us through a letter. This letter was addressed to Hon'ble Robert Hedges, President and Governor of Fort William, Council of Bengal by John Serman and Edward Stephenson. Both of them were ambassador of the East India Company's Council in Bengal to the Court of Emperor Farrukhsiyar.⁴ This letter is dated 10th March, 1716 and was written from Delhi. In this letter Banda Singh Bahadur has been described as 'The great Rebel Gooroo' who was captured along with his family and 780 associates by Abduls Samad Khan, the Governor of the Province of Lahore. However, all of them were fettered and brought to Delhi. All alives were severally mounted on camels which were sent out of the city of Delhi for that purpose. Besides, there were about 2000 heads struck upon poles, being those who died by the sword in the battle. All alive were sent into close Prison. Except Banda Singh and his close confidents, all were beheaded at the rate of 100 a day. Banda Singh and 'most of his *mutsu'ddy's* were kept alive for some time 'to get account of his treasures in the several parts of his kingdom'. Later on, however, they too were put to death. Both of these British agents were astonished to find that none of them apostatized for the sake of life. They asserts that, 'it is not a little remarkable with what patience

they undergo their fate and to the last it has not been found that none apostatized from his new formed Religion.⁵ Though this information is very brief, yet it is very significant to understand the true character of Sikh movement under Banda Singh Bahadur besides delineating his firm faith in Sikhism.

Writing in the 1770s, A.L.H. Polier, a Swiss engineer, confused the achievement of Banda Singh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. For instance, while narrating the Sikh struggle against the Mughals, he asserts that, 'the fame of Gorou Govind, who then made his appearance and of whom many prodigies were related, contributed greatly to establish this sect. This reputed saint soon found himself at the head of a numerous force, and began to make excursions and converts, sword in hand. He exerted himself so successfully, that at last he drew the attention of Government towards him'.⁶ He further asserts, though wrongly, that 'an army was formed in or about 1715 under the command of Abdus Semad Khan Subedar of Lahore' by the order of Emperor Furrukhsiyar who ordered him 'to exterminate the sect'.⁷ However, 'after many marches and pursuits he came up with their main body, which he totally defeated. He had even the good luck to take *Gorou Govind* himself prisoner. The *Gorou* was sent to Delhi, set up in an iron cage, and afterwards put to death, and his disciples, wherever they were caught, were on their refusal of turning Mohammedans, immediately executed'.⁸ Thus information provided by Polier besides being sketchy in factually inaccurate.

Writing nearly a decade after polier, Major James Browne provided a bit systematic account of the life and achievements of Banda Singh Bahadur. According to Browne, Banda Singh was 'the native of a village Pundory' in the Jalandhar Doab. Before commencing his career as a warrior, he was 'a *Biragee Fakeer*' and had been for many years the intimate friend of Guru Gobind Singh. About the mission of Banda Singh Bahadur Browne holds that after 'hearing the destruction of his (Guru Gobind Singh) defenceless family, he gave way to the deepest impression of grief and resentment, which at length settled into a fixed determination to seek

revenge'. To achieve his determined end, Banda Singh contacted 'to all the most powerful and zealous sicks, who had been the followers of *Gooroo Gobind*'. Having 'excited in them the same spirit with which he himself was actuated and enrolled himself in the fraternity of the Sicks, with surprising diligence and activity, and aided by uncommon abilities', he, 'collected the sect together in arms from all quarters and inspired them with the most ardent spirit of revenge'.⁹

Political chaos which resulted due to the struggle for throne between the sons of Aurangzeb gave an opportunity to Banda Singh Bahadur to collect together a large number of irregular army of the Sikhs and attacked Nawab Wazir Khan at Sarhind. Wazir Khan came out to give battle to the Sikhs with all the troops he had under his command. The Sikhs 'inspired by enthusiasm and revenge' gave a total defeat to the Mohammadan forces. Wazir Khan himself was killed at the spot and a greater part of his army was cut into pieces. The Sikh forces occupied Sarhind. Entire family of Wazir Khan was put to death alongwith every dependent and servant belonging to him.¹⁰ Diwan Sucha Nand was 'torn to pieces, with every circumstances of cruelty which savage revenge could dictate'¹¹ All the mosques and tombs were destroyed. Browne further holds that such was the terror of the Sikhs that all the inhabitants of Sarhind both Muslims and Hindus sought safety not only in submitting to their authority but professing to be a member of the Sikh fraternity by embracing Sikhism. This, however, is an exaggeration. To Browne Banda Singh was 'a man of great art and address'. To increase his force he encouraged with a view : treating those with the most flattering kindness who came into his sect, and those who refused with unrelenting severity'¹². As a result of this policy, very soon the territories from Panipat to Lahore came under the authority of the Sikhs. Besides his policy, Banda Singh was benefited from the absence of Emperor Bahadur Shah from the capital with the main army. The forces available in the provinces of Lahore, Delhi or Agra were not sufficient to 'undertake the reduction of the insurgents'.

However, from the news of the defeat and death of Wazir Khan, Bahadur Shah surmised the intensity of the Sikh movement under Banda Singh Bahadur. He at once decided to move with his whole force from Deccan to the Punjab. Consequently, Sultan Kuli Khan was ordered to command an advance army of cavalry and artillery with instructions that, 'he should march by way of Delhi, and thereby stop the progress of the Sicks on that side, protecting the inhabitants as much as possible, to prevent the insurrection from spreading, and to put every man to the sword that he should find with his hair and beard at full length- that being the characteristic external of the Sicks.'

Sultan Kuli Khan attacked the Sikhs near Panipat. In the ensuing battle, 'there was a great slaughter on both sides, but especially on that of the Sicks, who being destitute of discipline, and unprovided with artillery, suffered very severely'. The defeat of the Sikhs was total. However, the survivors fled towards Sarhind to join Banda Singh.

Joined by reinforcement sent by the Emperor under the command of Munim Khan, Sultan Kuli Khan marched towards Sirhind. To meet the Mughal forces, Banda Singh drew up his army which consisted to forty to fifty thousand horse and foot. The battle was long and bloody but eventually the royal army was victorious with 'terrible slaughter of the Sicks'. Banda Singh alongwith the remainder of the army shut himself in the fort of Lohgarh. The fort was closely invested by the Imperialists. Meanwhile, the Emperor Bahadur Shah himself joined the camp of Sultan Kuli Khan. By that time siege had lasted a month. The 'besieged finding their provisions and ammunition fail them, and being determined to sell their lives as dear as possible, they sallied out of the fort sword in hand.' A desperate but unequal conflict ensued. The 'greater part of the Sicks were cut into pieces on the spot, many were taken prisoners, and together with other prisoners were sent to Delhi, where they were all publically executed, after having been offered their lives on condition of embracing, the Mussalman faith, which they rejected

with contempt'.¹⁷ Thus Browne's treatment of Banda Singh though, is in detail and systematic as compare to Polier yet it does not differ materially so far his perception of Banda's mission and achievements, is concerned. Also, it is not free from factual errors.

Writing in 1790s, George Forster, describes Banda Singh 'a deciple' of Guru Gobind Singh who had attended him at Deccan before coming to Punjab, after the demise of his master. Claiming a merit from his late connection with Guru Gobind Singh, he raised a 'small force' and 'in various desulatory enterprises, established the character of 'a brave but cruel soldier'. However, his successes at length drew to his standard whole body of the Sikh nation. Having confidence in the strength of his army and emboldened by the absence of the Emperor, Banda Singh after subverting the petty Mohammaden Chiefs, attacked Wazir Khan at Sarhind. Wazir Khan fell in an action which 'was faught with an obstinate valour but ended in the total defeat of the imperial troops'.¹⁸ The Sikhs, holds Forster, 'expressed an extraordinary joy at this victory, as it enabled them to satiate their revenge for the death of the sons of Govind Singh'. Wazir Khan's family along with a multitude of the inhabitants were put to death. Not only this, mosques were 'overthrown or polluted' and the dead, turn out of their grows, were exposed to the beasts of prey.¹⁶ However after the fall of Sarhind in 1710, the Sikh forces laid waste the territories up to the neighborhood of Delhi.

'Alarmed at the progress' asserts Forster, and 'irritated at the cruelties they had exercised, he (Bahadar Shah) marked towards their stations with a determination to crush the sect, and revenge the injuries that had been inflicted on Mohamadan religion'.¹⁷ Sultan Kuli han, however, attacked the Sikhs near Sarhind and 'put them to fight a bloody conflict'. They took refuse in the fort of Lohgarh. The fort was beiseged. Many of them were made prisoners while Banda Singh escaped. Those who survived the disaster alongwith Banda Singh could not be subdued till the death of Bahadur Shah. Like Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah, who succeeded him, was unable to put restraint on the progress of the Sikhs. However, during the

reign of Furrukhsiyer, Abdus Samad Khan, the governor of Lahore, attacked the Sikh vigorously and in a battle gained a decisive victory. Those who escaped 'took shelter with Banda in Lohgarh, but being closely invested and reduced to extreme distress from hunger, they surrendered at discretion'. The captives were carried in triumph to Delhi where they were 'exhibited to the inhabitants of the city in an ignominious manner'.¹⁸ Forster asserts that they 'met a deserved fate, for their savage and often unprovoked cruelties. Yet they met it with an undaunted firmness, and died amidst the wondering praise of the populace'.

To Forster, the contribution of Banda Singh Bahadur to the Sikh movement was not less significant. He asserts that 'The Sicque Common-wealth acquired an active strength from the spirit and valour of Banda, who had inspired them with zeal with rendered meritorious every act of cruelty to the enemies of his faith, and gave their attack, until opposed by the collective force of the empire, an irresistible impuse. The success of this fierce adventurer, had allured to his standard a numerous body of proselytes: some to obtain a protection against the rapacity of the Sicque Government, others to take shelter from the oppressions or just demands of the empire: whilst many embraced the new doctrine, from the hope a participating in the plunder of the Punjab'.¹⁹

Thus, we see that none of these scholars have delved either on the early career of Banda Singh or his meeting with Guru Gobind Singh. Besides, being sketchy, these accounts are factually inaccurate. Almost all of them have concentrated on only three points. mission of Banda Singh Bahadur; nature of the Sikh struggle under his leadership; and his character and personality with varying degree of emphasis. They have misunderstood and therefore misrepresented his mission and achievements. In other words many misconception about this leading light of the 18th Century Sikh History which generated with these scholar were latter on followed by many Indians as well as non-Indian Scholars of Sikh history. Inspite of all these shortcomings, these writings are significant in providing several

clues to understand Banda Singh Bahadur and his achievements. For example, we can infer from these writings that Banda Singh was baptized and appointed leader of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh before his demise at Nander. He had a firm faith in Sikhism and died as a Sikh martyr. Also, we do not find any information about the innovations about diet, dress and salutation which were attributed to him by the 19th century westren as well as Indian historians. Above, all he was brave and desperate fighter who shook the very foundation of the Mughal rule. He was the first to establish a Sikh state under the banner of the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh.

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Banda Singh Bahadur - Most Misinterpreted and Misunderstood warrior of the Sikhs

Dr. Kulbir Singh Dhillon*

Banda Singh Bahadur, a great Sikh warrior, was not only misinterpreted but also misunderstood in the history of the Sikhs' by the large number of Muslim historians as well as by the Non-Muslims. Banda Singh Bahadur's historical assessment made by the Muslims and non Muslims has been full of acute inaccuracies because of the amateur historiographers of 18th and 19th centuries. Secondly the Muslim and Non Muslim writers of 18th and 19th centuries knowingly twisted the hard core facts reflected from the Sikh traditions, to settled their own score by wrongly interpreting Banda Singh Bahadur's life and mission. Not only this, rather his role was also minimised in the Sikh Movement. The fanatic Muslim writers erroneously interpreted the Sikh struggle against Islam.

The lack of knowledge of reality and blind bigotry of persian writers like Khafī Khan's, *Muntakhib-ul-Lubab*; Gulam Hussain's *Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin* and also S. M. Latif's, *History of Punjab*, etc. under the influence of their pro-Islamic prejudices against the Non-Muslims's painted Banda Singh as blackest as possible. "They have readily accepted false and flimsy rumours as historical truths and have charged Banda

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Singh with the blackest-curelty and barbarism”². S.M. Latif convicted Banda Singh Bahadur who “butchered, beyonated, strangled, hanged, shot down, hancked to pieces and burnt alive every Mohammedan in the place nor was this all the sanctity of the grave yard was violated and corpses were exhumed, hew to pieces and exposed as carrion. The mosques were polluted and burnt down, and the Mullas, Moulvis and Hafizes, subjected to the greatest indignities and tortures”³. Even he mentioned that children and women were not spared by the infidels. Khafi Khan further added that even wombs of pregnant women were ripped open and babies cut to pieces.⁴ Gulam Hussain remained more concerned to give details of atrocities committed by Banda Singh Bahadur.⁵

The contemporary and near contemporary Sikh writers like Kesar Singh Chibber, Rattan Singh Bhango, Sarup Das Bhalla, Giani Gian Singh, Koer Singh etc. were not behind to their counterpart of Muslim writers to creat confusion and misunderstanding to the readers about Banda Singh Bahadur. Historian and writers did not give justice to Banda Singh Bahadur in their writings. They not only used half name of Banda Singh Bahadur like Banda or Banda Bahadur, Bairagi Bir or Bir Bairagi or Bairagi, Baba Banda, Bando, Bande, Banda Sahib, Banda Padshah, Veer Banda or Banda Veer but also put lot of allegation against Banda Singh Bahadur, as Gustakh, egoistic, revival of Gurudom changer of Sikh tradition, a non-Khalsa, magician, and such other allegation to malign his reputation in the Sikh Jagat.

Unfortunately before the authentic source material come to light a large number of historian like Karam Singh⁶, Hari Ram Gupta, Sohan Singh (Banda The Brave), Khazan Singh become the victim of one-sided full of prejudices source material produce by the Muslim and Sikh writers of 18th and 19th centuries which resulted gross misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the life, carrier and mission of Banda Singh Bahadur.

Guru Gobind Singh captilized Banda Singh and dressed him like a *shastardhari* Sikh and “at that very place, the Guru, having administered the Pahul to him, made him a Sikh and shifted him to his camp”. In an instant, he was changed man from Baragi to Khalsa. He had now become

a full-fledged Sikh, a disciple of Sikh Gurus, a member of the Khalsa brotherhood. At Guru's camp he was prepared for a new militant mission. Banda Singh learnt with great interest the Sikh history and religious texts with the help of other Sikhs who were present at Guru's camp. When he heard the stories of the Martyrdoms of Guru Arjan dev and Guru Teg Bahadur who were the victim of the injustice of the Mughal Sarkar, the accounts of the battles of Guru Gobind Singh and his two elder sons, against the oppression of ruling class, also about two younger sons of Guru who were mercilessly butchered to death, for their refusal to accept Islam by the order of Wazir Khan, Faujdar of Sirhind, then Banda aflamed for immediate action. "His mind was in revolt, hungering deeply for his Guru's permission to let him rush to the Punjab and to try his luck at fighting the tyrannical rulers there".⁷ Ganda Singh writes, "The news of this treacherous deed maddened Banda Singh to fury. His blood boiled with him. He could now ill-afford to remain inactive."⁸ Sohan Singh writes "Banda at once girt up his loins to wreak a full vengeance of all this. In a word, he was so much bestirred that he could wait no longer".⁹ G.S. Deol also agreed that Banda Singh Bahadur left Punjab during the life time of Guru Gobind Singh.¹⁰

Before departure to Punjab Guru Gobind Singh bestowed him the title of Bahadur, because Guru was going to assign him a great honour as a Militry leader of the Khalsa. Guru had given him five arrows from his own quiver as token of a divine support from himself. Guru Gobind Singh then gave him twenty five most trustworthy followers including a council of Panj Piare, consisting of Bhai Binod Singh, Bhai Kahan Singh, Bhai Raj Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh and Bhai Ram Singh¹¹ to assist Banda Singh Bahadur to theatre of their activities. A Nisham Sahib and a Nagara also bestowed on him as a symbol of 'temporal authority'. "Thus raised to the position of Jathedar or leader of the Khalsa¹², and strengthened by the Guru's Hukamnamas or letters to the Sikhs all over the country to join him in his expedition.¹³ Banda Singh Bahadur left for the Punjab in the first week of October 1708, before the death of Guru Gobind Singh to initiate and carry on the campaign against the cruelty and injustice of the Mughal government.¹⁴

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3. S. M. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, Calcutta, 1891, pp. 274-275.
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5. Gulam Hussain, *Siya-ul-Mutakhrin*, Trans. English, by Briggs John, The Siyar-ul-Mutakhrin, Allahabad, 1924.
6. Ganda Singh writes that Sardar Karam Singh admitted his mistake of writing 'Banda Bahadur was not a baptised Sikh' and certainly have issued a revised edition of his book if he had not died before fulfilling his promise made with Ganda Singh. See Ganda Singh's article, Banda Singh Bahadur, His Achievements and The Place of his Execution, Published in *Punjab Past and Present*, Vol. IX, October 1975, pp. 461-462.
7. Sohan Singh Seetal, *Rise of Sikh Power in the Punjab*, Ludhiana, n.d., p. 25.
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14. The mission of Banda Singh Bahadur has been mostly misunderstood by the Muslim and Sikh writers of 18th and 19th centuries that he has been commissioned by Guru Gobind to avenge the killing of his sons. If it is so than his task should have been finished after the defeat and death of Wazir Khan, faujdar of Sirhind but he continued his struggle against the oppression of the ruling classes.

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Banda Singh Bahadur on the Canvas of History

Dr. Sukhdial Singh*

There is a close relation between history and mythology like the milk and the water. Doubtlessly, water is added to make the milk thin and sometime to increase its quantity. But the fact is that the merit of the milk diminishes with this. Exactly in the same way to make use of history and to make it of great worth, mythology is taken resort too. But when we mince mythology with history the significance of history altogether vanishes. When the milk is kept away from water the purer it is, similarly if we keep mythology apart from history a good harvest can easily be reaped.

The account of Banda Singh Bahadur written till day reflects more of mythological elements than history. It is based either on the secondary or on unreliable sources. The writings of Rattan Singh Bhangu, Gian Singh and Karm Singh do not give us, in any way an historical and logical account. It is a tragedy of our history that the account of Banda Singh Bahadur is mostly based on these writings. These are not based on primary and logical evidences. Fortunately, we have so many contemporary and near-contemporary sources in Persian, English and Punjabi which provide historical and trustworthy information about the activities of Banda Singh Bahadur. Some of these writings are : *Akhbar-i-Darbar-i-Mualla*, *Fatuhah-Namah-i-Samadi*, *Asrar-i-Samadi*, *Ibratnama* of Mohammad Harisi and *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* of Khafi Khan in Per-

sian, a letter of John Sarman and Stephenson and Major James Browne's account in English and *Bansawalinama* of Kesar Singh *Chhibber* in Punjabi. There is a need to rewrite the history of Banda Singh Bahadur which should be based on these sources. So that the history of the achievements of our great hero can be presented more accurately and in an historical way. It has been endeavoured to bring an historical truth to the maximum in this article. That is why the present article has been entitled 'Banda Singh Bahadur on the canvas of history'.

The crusade of Banda Singh Bahadur was in continuation of the Sikh Movement which was initiated by Guru Nanak Dev and matured during the period of Guru Gobind Singh when the *Khalsa* Commonwealth was founded. The creation of the *Khalsa* was, in fact, a declaration of a state. Though Guru Gobind Singh neither acquired any territory nor challenged the sovereignty of the Mughal Empire yet the institution of the *Khalsa* was a state within itself. The Raja of Bilaspur State in which the headquarter of the Guru was situated, could realize the reality of the Khalsa commonwealth. That was why he waged a relentless war against the Guru, first with the assistance of his neighbouring states and then with that of the Mughal forces. This war continued until the Guru and his Khalsa forces were ousted from the city of Anandpur Sahib¹. After the evacuation of Anandpur Sahib the Guru entered the Malwa region where he fought a successful battle against the forces of Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind Province, at the pond of Khidrana (Mukatsar)². After this victory, the Guru wrote Zafarnama, (a letter of victory) to Emperor, Aurangzeb, who invited the tenth Guru to his court in the South. The Guru travelled down South to meet the Emperor but unfortunately the Emperor died before the Guru reached there. Aurangzeb's son Bahadur Shah succeeded him. At that time the new emperor was in the North, so the Guru returned to meet the new Emperor and the meeting between the two, took place at Agra which was proved successful³. The new Emperor received the Guru with due honour and requested the Guru to accompany him towards Southern states. The Guru accompanied the Emperor upto Burhanpur in Madhya Pradesh. Here, the Guru got himself separated from the emperor and went to Nanded Sahib. At that time, Nanded Sahib was a center of the Sikh Sangats of the South India. Here, the Guru was attacked by the two mercenaries of Wazir Khan. The attack proved so fatal that the Guru

died on 7th October, 1708. Before his demise, Guru Gobind Singh nominated the political leader of the Khalsa Commonwealth. The man who was nominated as the leader, was none else but Banda Singh Bahadur.

With the creation of the *Khalsa* on the *Baisakhi* day of 1699 some vital issues regarding the Khalsa commonwealth's constitutional and organizational structure were permanently solved. For example, the *Khalsa* Commonwealth was organized under the collective leadership of the five beloved ones (*Panj Pyaras*). This was to be the permanent presidium of the *Khalsa* community. All the policies and programmes were to be formulated by this presidium. The *Khalsa* Commonwealth was to be the legislative body under the denomination of *Sarbat Khalsa*. Guru Gobind Singh nominated Banda Singh Bahadur as the executive head of the Khalsa Commonwealth in this milieu. The presidium of the five beloved ones was to be his advisory body while the *Sarbat Khalsa* his legislative body. The five beloved ones were *Bhai* Baj Singh, *Bhai* Fateh Singh, *Bhai* Ram Singh, *Bawa* Binod Singh and *Bawa* Kahn Singh. Banda Singh Bahadur was to execute his powers with the advice of this presidium and with the approval of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. Truly speaking, with this had started the political character of the Khalsa commonwealth.

First of all, Banda Singh Bahadur directed *Bhai* Daya Singh and *Bhai* Dharam Singh, the two of the *Panj Piaras* selected by the Guru himself at the time of the creation of the *Khalsa*, to remain at Nanded Sahib⁴ to look after the place where the *Guru* was cremated. He himself with an armed contingent, proceeded to the Punjab. He reached and camped in the precincts of the two small villages named Sehar and Khanda. These villages are, at present, situated at the same distance between Sonapat and Rohtak quite close to Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire at that time.

The accounts of Banda Singh's background before coming in the Sikh fold are based neither on the contemporary writings nor seem logically accurate. His background of *Bairagi* sainthood appears controversial⁵. One can see many contradictions in his background of *Bairagi* sainthood⁶. Banda Singh's knowledge of geographical situation of the North-India, his accurate plannings of military expeditions and his adoption and proclamation of political policies show that he had a background of a trained and well known military General. Banda Singh's military consciousness had considered the North-India, the weakest point of the

Mughal Empire. Therefore, he started his armed struggle from the area, lying between Sonapat and Rohtak. This was neither the task of a clever *Bairagi* Saint nor it could be the task of a person who had recently joined the Sikh Religion. To take up arms against the mightiest Empire of the world could be done only either by a leader of the masses or by a trained army General. If we consider that he had a background of *Bairagi* saint then he could not be related to the Punjab and the Sikh Community. But, the way, he made the Sikh community to follow him after reaching the border of the Punjab, he attacked selected military posts with exact planning and devastated the famous Mughal posts one by one, made it clear that Banda Singh was a man of the masses and also was well informed of the political situation of the Punjab. This could be the task of a person who was known to Guru Gobind Singh and his militant *Khalsa* for a long period and who himself was well known student of *Gurmat* Philosophy, its literature and history. The method of describing the meeting between the Guru and Madho Das *Bairagi* as shown by our writers appears to be such a dramatic event which can be called as a drama to be acted on a stage. The *Khalsa* Commonwealth was not a toy of the children which could be given to anyone to play. This was a well-disciplined society, well-studied philosophy and well-developed culture within the long span of 239 years. It had brought a unique revolution in the Indian-sub-continent. This revolution had made the crushed ones the proprietors of the land, turned the flow of the rivers and reversed the wheel of the time. So it was a very serious question to select a leader of this well-knit *Khalsa* Commonwealth. This institution could not be compelled to come under the leadership of such a non-serious man like Madho Das *Bairagi* who was famous as a clever, haughty and a notorious saint.

There was a Sikh Regiment in the army of prince Muazzam. This fact is supported by a *Hukamnama*⁷ of Guru Gobind Singh which was written to the Sikh *Sangat* of Prince Azim-ud-din (Muazzam). Kesar Singh Chhibber⁸ also throws light on this fact. Banda Singh Bahadur was a commander of that Sikh Regiment. He was a tested and faithful devotee of Guru Gobind Singh. It may be possible that his real name might be different but he was known as the Guru's Banda in the army of Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor. It is said that Banda Singh himself felt happy by being called as the Guru's Banda. After the baptism he

became Banda Singh and the title of 'Bahadur' was given by Guru Gobind Singh himself at the time of his nomination as the leader of the *Khalsa* Commonwealth⁹.

The Guru had already viewed his bravery and devotion. Banda Singh was one of the topmost selected army Generals of the Emperor. In the year, 1698 when Prince Muazzam (Bahadur Shah's name before being an Emperor) was passing through the Punjab on his way to Kabul then Banda Singh's own Sikh Regiment was also with him. In *Bachittar Natak*, it is mentioned as *Ahadiyas*. These *Ahadiyas* crushed the forces of the hill *Rajas* and the enemies of the Guru but did not give even a little blow to the Guru's Sikhs¹⁰. At that time, this whole process was due to Banda Singh's presence in the prince's army.

Banda Singh always carried with him the mission of the *Guru* whether he was in the army of Bahadur Shah or he had established his own kingdom. He had made only those places the victim of his attacks, the rulers of which had ill-treated the Guru. He had a full faith in *Guru Granth Sahib*. In his conversation, in his behaviour as well as in his day to day dealing, only Sikh culture and norms were found. He did everything for the welfare of the *Khalsa*. He used to call¹¹ 'Singh Sahib' to whomsoever he met. 'Singh Sahib' was very lofty title and even till day it is so. At present it is used for top-most Sikh personalities like the *Jathedar* of the *Akal Takhat Sahib* and the Head-*Granthi* of *Sri Darbar Sahib*. Banda Singh addressed with this title while calling his every companion. It means that he considered his every colleague a greater Sikh than himself. He used to preach the idea among the Sikh masses to fight for sovereignty. He used to repeat these words :

Without gaining control over the State, it is not possible to uphold *Dharma*; and without *Dharma* the conscience of human being is ruined.

(ਰਾਜ ਬਿਨਾ ਨਹਿੰ ਧਰਮ ਚਲੈ ਹੈ। ਧਰਮ ਬਿਨਾ ਸਭ ਦਲੈ ਮਲੈ ਹੈ।)

"No one willingly bestows kingship upon anyone else; He who acquires it does so through the might of arms."

(ਕੋ ਕਾਹੂ ਕੋ ਰਾਜ ਨ ਦੇ ਹੈ। ਜੋ ਲੈ ਹੈ ਨਿਜ ਬਲ ਸੇ ਲੈ ਹੈ।)

Banda Singh was a military General of par-excellence. His very beginning of struggle proves itself that he had the knowledge of a geographical situation of whole of the northern-India. From Nanded, he directly reached that area which was the weakest point of the Mughal

Empire. He would have reached the Jatt dominated Malwa at first from where he could collect the recruits in large number to his army. But nowhere in the Malwa he could have found the place to plunder and from where he could get treasures and arms. Keeping this fact in mind he chose the area between Delhi and Sarhind where the Mughal *Nawabs* and *Faujدارs* had been ruling. Moreover, the Emperor was not in Delhi. At the same time, neither the incharge of the Delhi administration nor the Governor of Sarhind had any interest in protecting these *Nawabs* and *faujدارs*. So very easily he devastated Kaithal, Samana, Ghuram, Kapura, Sadhaura and Banur. No Governor came to their help. These victories proved that his plannings were totally correct. From these cities, he got enough money, ammunition and horses. He made his economic position very strong from these military exploits.

Banda Singh neither attacked Sarhind directly nor he went to attack Delhi straightway. There was no need for him to get involved with the ruler of Lahore and Delhi. He attacked where it was essential. He had cut off the wings of Sarhind before reaching there. The cantonments of Samana, Sadhaura, Ghuram and Banur etc. worked as a bulwark for Sarhind. Banda Singh first, broke this bulwark and then attacked Sarhind. By the time he attacked Sarhind, it had totally been crippled. All these activities proved that how Banda Singh carried out his expeditions paying attention to every aspect of attack. The armies of Sarhind province were crushed only in one day battle.

Sarhind was a unique city at that time. For centuries, it had been prospering its richness. Therefore, very beautiful gardens had been planted there. The strong forts, elegant *havelies* and lofty palaces had been constructed there. Emperor Jahangir liked this place so much that he selected this city for his residence. He got the construction of air-conditioned palaces in the mid of *Aam-khas-Bagh*. It was known at that time as *Bagh-i-Hafzi*¹². All these buildings were waiting for the foot-steps of Banda Singh Bahadur after the battle of chapar-chiri. But, the city of Sarhind did not motivate the *Sikhs* to rule rather it reminded them of tortured-sacrifices of their Guru's young sons. In view of this grief-stricken memory, Banda Singh could saw the beauty of neither the garden nor the residence of the palaces. The idea of making this city its headquarter was not in the mind of the *Khalsa*. Instead of this, the *Sikhs* cut down the gardens, ruined the forts, destructed the *havelies* and fired

on the palaces. The Sikh's anger was not extinguished even after this devastation. They also resolved that they would not leave there even a single brick. To fulfill this resolution they took two bricks and struck these against each other. This process continued for a long time even after the victory of Sarhind. Thus literally, whosoever visited Sarhind took two bricks in his hands, struck these against the other and threw the same either in the Satluj if he went towards the west or in the Ghaggar if he went towards the east. The Khalsa also ploughed with the donkeys at the ruins of the city¹³. To plough with the donkeys was, and till day, considered dishonour of the place.

Banda Singh Bahadur did not allow that place to enjoy peace, the ruler of which had maltreated his Guru. Had Banda Singh desired, he could have easily used this beautiful city as a centre of his State. But it appears that he did not want to construct his palaces at the ruins of his Guru's sons.

Some historians such as Karm Singh and Ganda Singh tried to take off the responsibility of the devastation of the city of Sarhind from Banda Singh Bahadur's shoulders by providing the excuse that it was done by only a few robbers who had entered his army with the object of loot and plunder¹⁴. However, this is a wrong inception. In a way, these historians have undermined the leadership of Banda Singh. If Banda Singh had not protected the cities, conquered by him, from such robbers then there could not be any meaning as well as the utility of law and order established by him in place of the Mughal administration.

In fact, the Sikhs destroyed the city because the idea of avenging was smouldering in their mind ever since the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh were bricked alive and the Guru's mother was put to death here by its Governor. The Khalsa had a chance to teach a lesson to the ruler of Sarhind. The lesson was taught by destroying the city, root and branch. The Khalsa hated Wazir Khan to such an extent that it related its hate even to the city of Sarhind. The Khalsa considered Sarhind as the "cursed city". It means that the city of Sarhind was cursed by Guru Gobind Singh. That was the reason that no Sikh Chief longed to take this city under his administration even when they again conquered it in 1764. This did not relate only to Banda Singh, this was also related to the other Sikh chiefs who followed Banda Singh in 1764-65. Ultimately the city of Sarhind was given to Bhai Buddha Singh by the resolution passed unanimously in the assembly of *Sarbat-Khalsa* in 1764. Buddha Singh sold it

to Baba Ala Singh of Patiala in lieu of a nominal price¹⁵. Baba Ala Singh also did not establish here his head-quarter, rather he made Patiala the capital of his State.

Banda Singh Bahadur had complete control over his army and there was no robber in it. He had a well disciplined army under his command. This army was so much devoted to the cause that it saw nothing in the battle field but a destruction of the enemy. The baptised *Khalsa* was the backbone of his army. This was an army of Saint-Soldiers who always repeated the name of the Lord from their lips and always thought of war in their hearts. It was, in fact, comprised of the true and loyal Sikhs who once had sat at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh himself and had been touched by the promethean fire which animated the great pontiff himself. They rallied round Banda Singh Bahadur in a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice as well as to carry on the crusade against the enemies of their movement. On the contrary of looting and plundering, hundreds of them sold all that whatever they had with them, purchased arms, and flocked to the new leader with a determination 'either to win the fight or to suffer martyrdom'. Banda Singh Bahadur infused such spirit into the hearts of these *Khalsa* Saint-Soldiers that even the most powerful and trained soldiers of the Mughal armies could not stand against them. His personal magnetism, his undaunted courage and extraordinary valour, knit these Saint-Soldiers, closely to him.

No robber or opportunist could deceive the *Khalsa* or its leader. At Sarhind, all the mosques and tombs stand in the same condition even today. All of this goes to the credit to the *Khalsa*. If the robbers were out of control then how could these tombs and mosques survive till today? Banda Singh Bahadur's first priority was to protect the religious places of Muslim society. He destroyed only the political establishments. He carried out even the funeral of those muslim soldiers, who were killed in the war, by the muslims themselves. No Mughal soldier was burnt, rather they were buried with due respect.

In the guerilla warfare, Banda Singh was very successful. He was always first to attack the enemy. His attack was sudden and speedy. He attacked like a leopard and ran also like a leopard. He never passed through the straight ways. He moved on the arduous wild routes by concealing himself like leopard. When the enemy came under his blow he pounced upon him like a leopard. The author of *Asrar-i-Samadi*, a contemporary account, describes the movement of Banda Singh Bahadur

and his Khalsa colleagues as that of lion and leopard. According to this author,

Lion-like they sprang upon the backs of the elephants, and flung on the ground those who were seated in the *haudas*.

Like leopards they would reach such places where even the fastest horse would be reluctant to proceed¹⁶.

He was never afraid of his enemy. He always irritated his enemy by his guerilla attacks. By his sudden and speedy attack he made his enemy stunned. The enemy could hardly settle and stand in the battle field, when Banda Singh caused a great loss to him. His attacks were full of magic-like acts. Many Mughal Generals were fed up with his guerilla tactics. In fact, his very name had acquired such a symbol of terror that his mere presence in the battle-field was enough to strike terror in the hearts of the *Nawabs* and the Generals of the Mughal Empire.

The author of *Asrar-i-Samadi* writes that "He raised such a serious rebellion in the State that the news spread to as far off places as Rome and Sham. He wrought such devastation in the country that even a serpent in the innermost recesses of the earth writhed in pain. Such was the terror of his name that not even a single Mughal Commander ventured forward to face this man's sword. He brought resurrection to the land. He inflicted crushing defeat on the most formidable Afghan *Faujdar* Bayazid Khan and his nephew Shams Khan."¹⁷

The battle of Lohgarh was very important from the guerilla tactics as well as from the angle of a pitched battle. Emperor Bahadur Shah attacked Lohgarh in 1710, but did not surround the fort at once. Moreover, he wasted a month in reaching Lohgarh from Sonapat. Banda Singh knew it well that his army was too small to face the royal forces. So he could run away easily towards mountains before the Emperor reached. But he did not run, rather he had been waiting for the Emperor as he wanted to fight with the royal forces. He fought and remained in the fort for a month. The royal forces could neither catch him nor kill him. When Banda Singh realised that his stores were about to finish in the fort and he could not fight any more while remaining there, he therefore, fled away from the fort. The royal forces were surprised with his safe flight. The battle of Lohgarh was the most important fight in Banda Singh's life as a warrior and military General.

After the victory of Sarhind, when Banda Singh moved towards the Jamuna river, he crushed all the *Nawabs* and *Faujdar*s of that area upto Saharanpur, Jalalabad and Deoband. When he moved towards the western area of Punjab he crushed all the rulers upto Chamba and Jammu. A single kingdom flowed like a straw before him. Banda Singh was like a storm. Wherever he went he went like a storm and moved like a whirlwind. Probably, there was not a General of Mughal forces who had not been humbled by him in the battle field.

To pounce upon the enemy with an electric speed and to get out of the seige successfully had become like his magic act. The Enemy thought that this type of attacks and flights could not be carried on by a man, it must be the act of a magician. This supernatural horror and magical effect was so great that when in the compound of Gurdas-Nangal, Banda Singh fell unconscious due to hunger, even then the enemy did not approach him at once. The contemporary writers, who were viewing the last battle of Gurdas-Nangal, stated that if even a dog or a cat came out of Banda Singh's compound, all of these were killed. Mughal officers thought that Banda Singh might get out of their clutches in the disguise of a cat or a dog. It was totally impossible for a cat or a dog, to think of it, where even a bird could not reach the seige over the months. But such views of contemporary writers show the standard level of their mind. Banda Singh was suddenly seiged in the compound of Gurdas-Nangal otherwise such a war-master could never be surrounded. Nature itself created such chances when even the great Generals got themselves killed in small encounters. The statement of Banda Singh at his last time clearly indicates that he was caught only after being fed-up of hunger otherwise none could dare to arrest him. Banda Singh was a follower of such a Guru who got the hawks hunted by the sparrows. Banda Singh proved his Guru's theoretical Philosophy true in reality when he smashed the pride and honour of big Mughal armies by the strength of poor peasants, low-born people and the *Vanjaras*.

Banda Singh was one of the foremost leaders in Sikh History who had established Khalsa State in the land of Punjab. Hence his acquisitions were unique. It was not a simple task to make the Mughal empire to yield. It was one of the powerful empires of the world at that time and there was no source of help for the Sikhs. In spite of all these hurdles Banda Singh Bahadur was able to organise the troops in thousands. He won all the Mughal posts one by one and appointed his own officials in all the cities won by him. He snatched the fort-palace named

Mukhlisgarh from the Mughal officers and made it his headquarter. The situation of this fort was important from the military point of view. Actually the low lying area below the fort of Lohgarh was a hilly slope and was full of lush green grass, woods and rivulets. This place was reserved by the Mughal rulers for hunting. Banda Singh got it repaired and had given it the shape of a fort. The loneliness of the hills and the forests was a good supplying place of feed to the horses and other animals.

Banda Singh Bahadur possessed the high ideal of life, sincerity, honesty, indomitable spirit, unbounded enthusiasm, single-minded devotion to his cause, dare-devilry of the highest type and the nobility of character.¹⁸ The secret of his success lay in his indomitable courage and unsurpassable activity, coupled with the invincible spirit and dogged tenacity of the Sikhs which made up for the scantiness of his resources.

The crusade under Banda Singh adopted an entirely different shape than that of the times of Guru Gobind Singh. The *Guru* was always defensive and after victories over his opponents, used to leave the place of fighting. But Banda Singh was an executive chief of the Khalsa and he executed his power by crippling and destroying the Mughal Empire in the Punjab. He occupied the territories, ousted the government officials and replaced them with his own. The *Suba* of Sarhind had twenty-eight *Parganas* and the officers of all of the *Parganas* were replaced, one by one by him. He abolished the *Zimindari* system and introduced peasant proprietorship which upto this day is recognized as one of the best fiscal reforms carried out by him. He applied his own policies. He forged an instrument of justice for the poor and the downtrodden and of severe chastisement for those who had been following the trade of oppression with impunity. According to Kesar Singh Chibber, Banda used to point out to his officials that according to the Holy *Granth* the best worship for a ruler is to be just. If you call yourselves the Sikhs of that great man, Guru Gobind Singh, did not do anything that was sinful, irreligious or unjust. He advanced the cause of true Sikhism and smite those who behaved in manners which had not been approved by the Sikh Gurus.¹⁹

It is believed by some that Banda Singh Bahadur followed the policy of blood and iron. It could be true in the circumstances he faced. The measures he adopted, only to execute justice and to punish the wrongdoers. He did so because he must have thought that such very measures could have brought home the tyrant officials. However, he also under-

stood that cruelty and oppression did not always pay. He showed that the only way to meet the eternal foe was to adopt the policy of paying them in their own coin. He believed in the proverb that a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye was the way to pay off old scores. He fought battles, took prisoners, killed them and seized the enemy's property. He issued his coins, had his own official seal and gave orders which had the force of *firman*s of Emperor. He was the first man among the Sikhs who laid down the foundation of political sovereignty of the *Khalsa*. He was the master of the whole region lying between the Sutlej and the Jamuna and he reined and exacted tributes from all sections of the population.²⁰ He made Sikhism popular with the people of Punjab by his bravery and generosity. He had shown what the *Khalsa* State meant. He had brought about a revolution in the minds of the Sikhs. A will was created among the Sikhs to have their own way. Heads could be cut off, but the ideas remained, leading ultimately to success and final goal.

He was a great revolutionary who broke down the barriers of caste, creed and colour. He appointed sweepers and cobblers as big officers before whom high caste Hindus, *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas* stood with folded hands awaiting their orders. Irvine writes that 'In all the *Parganas* occupied by the Sikhs, the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join Banda, when in a short time he would return to his birthplace as its ruler with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with folded hands, awaiting his orders. Not a soul dared to disobey his order and men who had often risked themselves in battle fields, became so cowed down that they were afraid even to remonstrate.'²¹

Banda Singh Bahadur was a true Sikh, but not a religious fanatic. He never converted the fighting into a religious war. Though his opponents, the Mughal officials, often converted their fight into a *Jehad*. The *Moulvis* of Batala *Pargana* waged a religious war against Banda Singh but he did not do in the same way. According to the information supplied in the *Ruqaat-i-Amin-ul-Doula*, *Dastur-ul-Insha*, Banda Singh proclaimed that "we do not oppose Muslims and we do not oppose Islam. We only oppose tyranny and we only oppose usurpation of the political power which belongs to the people and not to the privileged individuals

or to the Mughals.” As a result of his secular policy, both in theory and practice, Banda Singh had about five thousand Muslim soldiers in his army. He looked after them, fixed their wages and allowances and permitted them to read *Khutba* and *namaz*. They were free to say their prayers in their own fashion. Testifying this, a royal news-writer, reported to the Mughal Emperor on 28th April, 1711 as follow :

“The wretched Nanak-worshipper has his camp in the town of Kalanaur upto the 19th instant. During the period he has promised and proclaimed ‘I do not oppress the Muslims’. Accordingly, for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixed a daily allowances and wages and looks after him. He has permitted them to *khutba* and *namaz*. As such, five thousand Muslims have gathered around him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say prayers in the army of the wretched Sikhs.”²²

Banda Singh Bahadur established new traditions in Sikh history. He assumed royal authority and struck coins in the name of the *Sikh Gurus*. They bore the following inscriptions :

Sikka zad bar har do aalam teg-i-Nanak vahib ast.

Fateh Gobind Singh Shah-i-Shahan fazal-i-sachha Sahib ast.

“By the grace of the true Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds. The sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons, and the victory is of Guru Gobind Singh, the King of Kings.”

The reverse of the coins had the following words in praise of his newly founded capital:

Zarb ba-amaan - dehar, musavarat shehar,

Zinat takhat mubarak bakhshat.

“Struck in the City of peace, illustrating the beauty of civic life and the ornament of the blessed throne”.

He also introduced an official seal for his state documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to his master.

Deg o teg o fateh o nusrat bederang.

Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh.

The Kettle and the Sword (the symbols of charity and power) victory and ready patronage have been obtained from Guru Nanak and Gobind Singh.

This was the tradition which was established by Banda Singh Bahadur and no Sikh ruler after him could ignore it. Every Sikh ruler,

had to adopt the inscriptions inscribed on the coins struck by Banda Singh. It should be remembered that easier is to follow the tradition than establishing it. Banda Singh Bahadur was the leader who established the new traditions in the Sikh history. He was selfless and true servant of the *Panth*. He accumulated no riches and he built no palaces for himself. Whatever territory he captured was in the name of the Khalsa Commonwealth. It was not considered to be his personal domains. He was the champion of the downtroddens, irrespective of whether they were Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. He was a man of valour, cool in the face of death and a staunch believer in Sikh faith. At the time of his execution, when given a choice between Islam and death, he opted the latter. He sacrificed his innocent son before his own eyes.

Banda Singh Bahadur was the first leader to place before the Sikhs a practical demonstration of Khalsa nationalism, to teach them to sacrifice themselves willingly at the altar of the Khalsa. The very thought of the noble example of the great martyr and his companions had contributed to elevate the minds of his people who had, in turn, supplied the pages of history with still nobler examples. It was through him that the path to conquest was discovered by the Khalsa.

The Khalsa revolution under the leadership of Banda Singh Bahadur was in no way a transitory military affair. It was full-fledged war against the Mughal imperialism for the emancipation of their Father-land from the shackles of oppressive and tyrannical rule. Though the struggle was, occasionally, indulged in avenging the tyranny of Wazir Khan but it took no time to make itself an open declaration of its design to replace the Mughals as a sovereign power in the Punjab. The active support which Banda Singh received from the downtroddens, the poor peasants, herdsmen and *vanjaras* had made the social struggle aspect of the conflict sufficiently articulate. The Zamindari system was abolished and the tillers of the cultivating lands were made the masters. This marked a revolutionary change in the social order in the Punjab and led to the emergence of small peasants as a potent force in the political life of the state. Though his state was short-lived yet through his revolutionary reforms he had succeeded in giving the people a foretaste of it. The revolution, even in its failure, had served the purpose of victorious armed impression. The astonishing victories of Banda Singh Bahadur had earned for the Sikhs a prestige and a marshall reputation which had never before

been associated with them. The Khalsa, even in the wake of the defeat, had become a household name for daring acts and sacrifice. Militarily also, it had an impact on the Mughal might. Banda Singh Bahadur had broken the charisma of the Mughal invincibility. The tillers of the land, the hewers of the wood, the drawers of the water, the traders of grains, the *vanjaras* had fought the born soldiers for seven years and not always without success. Man to man, the saint-soldiers of the Guru had proved their worth. Out-numbered and out-gunned, though they had been defeated, but instead of bringing disillusionment and despair in its train the defeat had left them even more confident of their strength and capabilities. Besides, the armed struggle had generated a spirit of revolt among the Sikhs which was a hard to suppress as it was difficult to generate. Though the Mughals had succeeded in crushing the Sikhs and restoring a semblance of imperial authority, the passive consent of a large majority of the Sikhs could not be taken for granted.

Consequently, it may be stated with a firm belief that Banda Singh Bahadur was the leader who practised the Sikh principles in his policies as well as in his day to day life. What was established and preached by Guru Nanak was practically consolidated by Guru Gobind Singh by creating the Khalsa. It was Banda Singh Bahadur who achieved all those objectives for whose fulfillment, Guru Nanak had started his mission. Guru Gobind Singh was a spirit and Banda Singh Bahadur was a body. When the spirit entered the body, both mingled with each other, resulted in a revolution. When Banda Singh came to Punjab there occurred a revolution. The *Khalsa* State was established on the ruins of the mighty Mughal Empire in the Punjab.

The activities and the achievements of Banda Singh Bahadur vividly show that neither he could be frightened by the armed forces nor could be moved by any greed. He had patience and therefore, could tolerate his baby son to be butchered in his own lap by the executioner. He could pierce his body bit by bit. Banda Singh's bravery and the nature of self-sacrifice cannot be described in words. It can be enquired only from Guru Gobind Singh. O Guru! you yourself tell us what was Banda Singh? Was he an ordinary man like us or a supernatural human being? It is really beyond our estimation how a human being could be above the feelings of pains and parental attachment? Banda Singh Bahadur himself was an example of his own.

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